

No 651.

Nov, 23^d 1910.

5 Cents.

PLUCK AND LUCK

THE FLYERS OF THE GRIDIRON;
OR, HALF BACK HARRY, THE FOOTBALL CHAMPION.

By HOWARD AUSTIN.



Ben Dawson made a savage leap forward with the evident intention of getting the ball. But instead of clearing Harry as he lay, it was evident he would fall short and land on Harry's stomach.

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER. 24 UNION SQUARE,
NEW YORK.

PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, November 7, 1898. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1910, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York.

No. 651.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 23, 1910.

PRICE 5 CENTS.

THE FLYERS OF THE GRIDIRON

OR,

Half-Back Harry, the Football Champion

By HOWARD AUSTIN

CHAPTER I.

HARRY HUNTER'S FOOTBALL ELEVEN—GRACE RUSHTON CHRISTENS THE TEAM.

"This is jolly! You can't have too much of it!"

"It's great!"

The speakers were two of a group of boys, most of whom were lying on the sand at Manhattan Beach, taking a sun bath.

There were about eight boys there, the majority of whom had ridden down from New York on their wheels on a hot day at the end of August to have a dip in the ocean.

The other bathers gazed admiringly at the merry faces and lithe forms of the lads, whose ages ranged from about fifteen to seventeen.

"Look! Look!" cried one of the boys, Ned Rushton by name.

"Faith," exclaimed Jack Burke a recent arrival from Ireland, with a wonderful brogue, rising lazily as he spoke, "it's your head I'll be afther punchin', Ned, me darlin', if there's nothin' worth seein'."

"It's a race," answered Ned, excitedly, "between Harry Hunter and Scott Wilson."

"Harry wins for certain!" cried one lad.

"He's behind now, anyway!"

The two boys were swimming from the beach toward a boat which was moored in the water almost two hundred yards from shore.

The shouts of the boys attracted the attention of all the bathers, and the entire crowd followed the struggle with great interest, sending up a tremendous cheer when Harry reached the boat first.

He stayed there a moment, then plunged into the waves once more, and was soon on the beach among his companions, receiving their congratulations.

"Scott will like you more than ever now, Harry," said Ned Rushton.

"What! do you think he will feel bad about a little thing

like this? I shouldn't if the race were fairly won. I'd simply wait for another chance, and then take care I was first home."

"Yes, but Scott's ways are not yours, Harry."

"Thank goodness, no!"

Laughingly, Harry threw himself on the beach among his companions, brushing back from his forehead the long, wet blonde locks which thickly covered his head.

"Isn't this great?" he cried.

"Just what I said a few minutes ago," remarked one of the boys.

"The worst of it all is that it can't last."

"You can't expect to have summer with you forever, and, by jingo! considering how hot it has been this year, it's a comfort there's such a thing as winter."

"Yes, and such a thing as school, Harry."

"Och! it's a most delightful place is school," cried Jack Burke. "Shure it's niver happy I am widout my books."

Then they all roared with laughter, for Jack Burke's acquaintance with his books would not have extended beyond the cover if he had pleased himself.

"I've a very different reason from Jack Burke's," said Harry, "for not feeling scared at the prospect of school. I'm not going back."

"What! have you left for good?"

"For next term only. Early next year I start for Europe, for I'm going to one of the German universities to study medicine. Until then I've nothing to do."

"Wish we were all in the same boat," cried Bob Field.

"Pshaw! we'd have nothing to do," growled one of the lads. "Better be at school than that."

"Well, I've left," said Ned Rushton, "and so has Scott Wilson."

And so they went on talking, playing tricks on each other, running or jumping on the beach, taking an occasional swim, and, in a word, they were having a good time generally.

Harry lay silent on the beach staring at the sky. Scott Wilson, sulky after his defeat, had kept away from the others, and

for a time Harry Hunter was quite alone. His companions, however, soon missed him, for he was usually the life and soul of the party, and Jack Burke headed them as they rushed along the beach toward him.

"Is it tired of our society ye are, Misther Hunter, I'm afther askin' ye?" he cried.

"No, no, Jack, don't talk bosh. I'm thinking."

"Shure, an' you're crazy to come to Manhattan Beach to think. It's alsy to do that home."

"Harry's thoughts are generally pretty good ones," said Ned Rushton. "I'd like to know what they're about."

"Well, just sit down here all of you, and you shall," was Harry's answer, "and I think you'll be interested, too. The problem I've been trying to solve is as bad as one of Euclid's. What shall we do with ourselves the next three or four months—that is, those of us for whom there's no school?"

"So?" cried Jack Burke. "Faith, an' it's glad I am I'm able to tell ye. Shure, we'll do nothin'."

"Oh! yes, we will, Jack."

"What, then?"

"We'll play football."

"Hurrah!" cried Ned Rushton. "I knew Harry wasn't wasting his time."

"But what club shall we join?" asked one of the party.

"No club at all," answered Harry, promptly.

"Why not?"

"Because we'll form one of our own."

"But can we?"

"I don't see any reason why we shouldn't. Do you?"

"It seems to me, Harry, we can't get enough fellows together," said Fred Fisk.

"How many do you suppose we want?"

"Eleven!" cried Ned Rushton.

"Pshaw! that's no good."

"No good, Fred? That's the right number?"

"For the game, yes. But we must have three or four extra men for substitutes."

"You're right, Fred. We want fifteen."

"Och! it's meself'll be afther gettin' them," shouted Jack Burke. "It's a lot of industrious lads loike meself, wid nothin' to do, I'm afther knowin' an', faith, they'll come along."

"How many have we here?" said Harry. "Let's call the roll. If a fellow knows he can come he can say yes, but not if there's a doubt. Now, Ned, what about you?"

"You don't want to ask. Of course, I'm with you, Harry."

"And I, Harry," cried Fred Fisk, and four other boys instantly made the same reply.

"With myself that's seven. What about you, Jack?"

"Count me as six."

"Come, come, you're not as great as all that."

"It's foive chaps I'll be afther bringin' wid me. Five and one is six. Shure, it's a trouble I have to make meself understood."

"Thirteen. Why, we're getting along famously."

"Then, there's me," cried Bob Field. "It's funny you all forgot me."

There was a general laugh.

Bob was a little fellow who weighed about eighty pounds.

"If you were about forty or fifty pounds heavier we might think of you, Bob."

"Then I have to miss all the fun?" wailed the boy, pulling a long face.

"Let him be our mascot," shouted Ned Rushton. "Will that do, Bob?"

"I should think so. Anything to be with you. I'm not big enough to play, perhaps, but my mouth's large enough to root for you."

"You've all forgotten Scotty Wilson," said Fred Fisk.

"He won't forget you," cried Ned Rushton, "if he hears you call him Scotty. He doesn't like that name. Here he comes."

"What are you fellows doing?" asked Scott Wilson. "Hatching a conspiracy?"

"We're talking over an idea of Harry's," cried several of the boys.

Scott Wilson's face darkened at the mention of this name, but he kept silent, and listened attentively to all that had passed.

"You have thirteen, you say?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then you want two more. Count me as one, and I have a friend I can bring."

"Do we know him?" asked Ned.

"No, but he's a real good sort of chap. You'll all like him."

No one noticed the mocking smile on Scott's face as he said this, nor the sneering tone in which the words were spoken.

"You've all forgotten one thing," cried Bob Field, at this point. "This tour of the football team's going to cost a lot of money. Where's it all to come from?"

"That's a very simple matter," answered Scott Wilson. "I will speak to my father about it; he's a millionaire, as you know."

"Faith, ye niver give us a chance to forget that."

Scott gave Jack Burke a black look, and proceeded:

"My father won't think twice before writing out a check for the whole amount. Just name a sum, Hunter, and I'll have the money advanced at once."

Harry Hunter bit his lips, but contrived to keep cool. He recognized Scott Wilson's insulting tone, for the latter spoke as if all his companions were a lot of paupers.

"Faith, it's an arrangement won't do for me, Misther Wilson," cried Jack Burke. "If I go, begorra, I pay my own share of the expenses."

"And so do I," cried all the boys together.

"Then that's settled," said Scott Wilson, slowly. "We must cut down the expenses, so that you fellows may not be ruined."

"What shall we call ourselves?" cried Fred Fisk.

A dozen suggestions were at once made, not one of which gave satisfaction.

"Here are Grace and Katie," said Harry, quickly. "Let us ask them."

"Hurrah! that's capital."

Two beautiful young girls, one blonde, the other dark, came up, looking very pretty in their bathing suits.

The dark girl was Grace Rushton, Ned's sister, and the other was Katie Clare, a schoolfellow, who was paying her a visit.

It was difficult for the girls to know what was wanted of them, for the boys crowded around, and everybody spoke at once. However, Harry managed to make it clear in the end.

"An appropriate name, Grace," said Scott Wilson, "would be one that means losing every game we play. That will be our fate."

"I don't think so. That's not generally Harry's luck," the girl answered, and Scott's face turned white with rage as he heard it.

"The name! the name!" shouted the boys.

"You'll be traveling about, won't you?"

"Yes, Grace, of course we shall."

"Then why not call yourselves the Pilgrims?"

"Hurrah! that's great. The Pilgrims we are."

And Harry dashed off down the beach into the water, followed by most of the boys and the two girls.

CHAPTER II.

TRAINING ON THE GRIDIRON—SCOTT WILSON'S CHALLENGE.

Harry Hunter did not go to sleep.

In organizing a football team there was much to be done, and he was very busy looking after the work.

He gained his father's consent to the project, somewhat reluctantly it must be admitted, but later on Mr. Hunter became almost as enthusiastic about the success of the team as Harry himself.

"Ned," said Harry, as the two boys were talking together, a few days after the visit to Manhattan Beach, "have you met the fellows Jack Burke promised to bring?"

"No."

"Well, you'll like them. They're a fine looking lot, and if they can play football as well as one would imagine from their appearance they can, we shall have a strong team."

"There's one thing you've forgotten, Harry."

"What is it?"

"We must have a coach and trainer."

"I have him; that's all fixed."

"Who is he?"

Before Harry could answer the two boys saw Scott Wilson walk up to the house.

Just called to have a little chat about this football tour of ours," he said, seating himself. "There are a good many things to think of. First, the trainer and coach. Now, I've struck the best to be had for money in America."

"What's his name?"

"Dave Reed."

"What! Slick Dave, as they call him," cried Harry, in amazement.

"I believe some idiots do put that name upon him," answered Scott Wilson, sullenly.

"By jingo!" put in Ned Rushton, "you're not serious, Scott, are you? You don't suppose we could engage a fellow with such a character as Reed has, do you?"

"What they say against him is a pack of lies," said Scott, hotly. "I've known him for years. He's smart, I admit, but he goes straight as a line. There's nothing crooked about David Reed."

"Then it's a case of giving a dog a bad name," laughed Ned.

"See here, you fellows, we needn't talk any more about it, for it's only wasting time."

"How?"

"Because," said Harry, "I've fixed on a trainer already. I was just telling Ned so as you came in the house. I mean to employ Tom Keene."

Scott Wilson bit his lips. It was clear he was enraged, though he tried not to show it.

"Don't you think, Hunter," he said, "that you are going a little too far?"

"In what way?"

"Taking on yourself to engage a trainer. It seems to me the rest of the team ought to have a voice in this matter. Why not hear what they say?"

"That's not a bad idea, Wilson. I don't want to boss this show. I'm only trying to do the best I can, and I hope to please you all. We're going to have some practice on Saturday; then we'll ask the boys what they think of it. Does that satisfy you?"

"Quite."

"You'll have trouble with that fellow, Harry," said Ned Rushton, after Scott Wilson had gone.

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure of it. And you're going to work the wrong way with him."

"I tried not to have a row with him."

"And that's just where you made a mistake. There's an old proverb, Give a man an inch, he'll take a yard. Now, you'll find that Wilson will think that you're afraid of him, and he will try to bulldoze you. You ought to have resisted him."

"Ned, I wasn't built that way. I'm too easy-going."

Ned smiled, for he realized that Harry was not quite as peaceful in his nature as he imagined, and, like all these quiet boys, he would be a tough foe when roused.

The practice took place on the parade ground at Prospect Park, Brooklyn, and the boys all assembled at the appointed time.

Scott Wilson was the last arrival. He brought with him a tall, wiry fellow he introduced as Dick Stagg.

"I daresay you all notice," said Harry, coming to the point at once, "that to-day we have no trainer with us."

"We shall want one!" cried several voices.

"Of course, and we must have one. I have one man to propose to you, and Scott Wilson another. You must decide. My man is Tom Keene."

"And mine David Reed," said Scott.

"Hands up for Tom Keene," cried Ned Rushton.

Every hand but two, those of Scott Wilson and his companion, Dick Stagg, were held in the air.

"That settles it," exclaimed Ned. "Now let's get to work. What shall we do?"

"Put in a few minutes at kicking," said Harry. "We'll try some drop kicking."

Harry put many of the team through this work, giving them advice and helping them to improve in their work.

"Your friend Hunter," said Dick Stagg, "seems to think he's the only man that knows anything."

"He's no friend of mine," answered Scott Wilson, hotly. "I hate the fellow."

"Then why do you come with the team?"

"I have my reasons. Later on you'll probably know what they are, for I shall want you to help me."

"I suppose," laughed Dick, "there's a girl at the bottom of this rivalry. There generally is."

"He'll find he's no chance with her," said Scott, savagely, "when I'm through with him. Here, come along, Dick, let us go and show some of these fellows how to kick."

Scott, who was always eager to shine, took three or four drop kicks one after the other, and soon had an admiring crowd around him, for he had sent the ball a great way each time.

"Arrah, an' it's a wonder he is," laughed Jack Burke. "It's meself tells ye so."

Scott saw that Jack was laughing at him and this amazed him.

"Perhaps you think you could kick better than me, Burke?" he demanded.

"Begorra, an' I'm thinkin' I might. But, shure, I know a lad who can!"

"Is he here?" asked Scott Wilson, contemptuously, glancing round at the players.

"Faith, it's your captain, Harry Hunter."

"Pshaw! look at him. What kind of drop kick do you call that?"

Scott directed attention to Harry, who had just kicked the ball to show one of the team how it should be done. Certainly, it was not a very successful kick.

"Harry can do better than that," said Ned Rushton.

"He'll have to do so to beat me."

"Harry! Harry!" some of the players began to shout.

"Well, what is it?"

"Come over here."

"I can't; don't you see I'm busy?"

"But Scott wants to see which can kick best."

"Not to-day, Ned, some other time will do. He must wait."

Scott laughed contemptuously.

"He's afraid. A fine fellow for a captain. A chap who shows the white feather at once. Ha! ha! what a captain."

Little Bob Field, the mascot of the team, was angry at this criticism, and he rushed across the field toward Harry Hunter.

"Harry!" he shouted, "what do you think? Scotty says you're afraid of him."

"Afraid!"

Harry dropped the football to the ground.

"Yes, that's what he said. He declared that you were afraid to kick against him, because you knew you would be beaten."

"We'll soon see about that."

Harry dashed across to where Scott was at such a rate that little Bob Field was left far behind.

"Wilson," said Harry, "I hear that you've been making remarks about me, saying I was afraid, in fact. Is that so?"

"I wanted to see how you could kick against me, Hunter, and you excused yourself. If I thought that meant you were afraid you have only yourself to blame for it."

"I'll kick the ball against you for anything you please," cried Harry, hotly.

"Hurroo! an' faith I'll be stakeholder," shouted Jack Burke, forcing his way to the front. "Hand over the money, me lads, to the safest bank in the country."

"I have a proposal to make," said Scott Wilson.

"Go on."

"You act as if you were captain of this team. Now, Hunter, you've never been elected to that position, have you?"

The boys were astonished that any one should dispute Harry's right to that position, and their looks showed as much.

"I suppose if the fellows didn't want me for captain they'd have said so."

"Will you fight for it?" cried Scott Wilson, quickly.

"How?"

"The one who kicks best shall have the position. What do you say to that?"

"Done!" exclaimed Harry, instantly. "I accept your offer. Let each man kick the ball three times, and the one who kicks it best and farthest is to be captain of the Pilgrims."

"That suits me."

"Harry, Harry, what folly," whispered Ned Rushton. "You should never have agreed to this. He's better than you are at this game, so, of course, he will beat you, and the whole business will go to smash, for I'm certain the fellows won't work under him. Don't do it, I tell you."

"I must, it's a bargain. I can't draw back now."

Scott's face was all smiles now, for already he saw himself captain of the team.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONTEST—THE PILGRIMS PLAY THEIR FIRST GAME.

It was finally arranged that there were to be three tests.

First a punt—that is, kicking the ball as it drops from the hand before it reaches the ground; secondly, a place kick, and, thirdly, an ordinary drop kick.

The winner of two out of the three events was to be captain of the team.

The excitement was tremendous, and there was but one opinion among the boys. They all thought Harry was to blame.

They anticipated Scott Wilson's victory, and they hated to see him captain of the eleven, for he was far from popular.

However, as Harry had said, it was too late to draw back now.

Scott kicked first.

He caught the ball well with the point of his toe as it dropped from his hands, and away it soared through the air.

It was a great kick, and the boys, although they did not love Scott, showed their appreciation of his skill by a loud cheer.

"That's a settler for Harry," said Fred Fisk.

"He was crazy to enter into such an arrangement!" exclaimed Ned Rushton, "I begged him not to do it."

Dick Stagg walked over to Scott.

"Let me be the first to congratulate you," he said.

And he shook him by the hand, saying: "I'm glad you're to be our captain."

"Shure, an' I'm glad Harry Hunter's to be our captain!" cried Jack Burke heartily. "Faith, here's my hand on it, Harry."

Harry took the ball, and though every eye was on him and the position was a critical one, he was as cool as ever.

The boys held their breath as the ball fell from his hand, and his foot launched forward to meet it.

What a shout they gave then! Harry had sent the ball fully ten yards further than Scott Wilson had done.

"First blood for Harry!" shouted Ned Rushton, joyfully.

"Hurroo for the captain!" cried Jack Burke. "Begorra, I towld ye so."

Scott was very pale now. The place kick was next on the programme.

Dick Stagg acted as placer, for he was the only boy that Scott Wilson cared to trust.

Just at this point Grace Rushton and Katie Clare came up to see the practice.

"Wish me luck, Grace," cried Scott, turning toward them.

"What are you doing?"

"I have a contest on with Harry Hunter."

"Well, Scott, I hope you'll get what you deserve."

Scott bit his lips.

"That means she wants me to lose," he muttered. "We shall see."

The feeling that Grace's sympathies were with Harry nerved Scott to do his best. He watched Dick placing the ball in position, close to but not touching the ground, aiming it at the goal as he did so. Then, as Scott signaled that it was right, Dick placed it on the ground, still steadying it by his finger.

Scott rushed at it and caught it full and fair with his foot, and away it went.

"A goal! A goal!" shouted the crowd, as they saw the ball pass over the bar, right between the two goal posts.

"You can't beat that," said Scott, triumphantly.

No doubt it was a fine kick, for the kicker had to allow for the wind, and he had done this to perfection.

Ned Rushton placed the ball for Harry.

As it went away it looked for a moment as if this, too, would be a goal, but nearing the posts a sharp gust of wind took the ball and carried it away to the left, outside of the goal post.

"Hurrah for Scott Wilson!" shouted Dick Stagg, but no one joined him in the cry, for Harry's friends were disheartened.

Grace turned pale.

"Has Scott won?" she asked.

"No, no," answered Jack Burke hastily. "It's all right, me darlin'; shure, an' it's wid Harry I am till the end. It's one an' one now."

"Oh, Katie, Harry must win! If he doesn't he won't be captain."

"Keep still, dear. You'll not improve matters by getting excited."

The boys all considered the contest over. There was only one event to come—the drop kick—and after what they had seen that day this was reckoned to be a certainty for Scott. In the practice he had shown plainly how much he excelled at this kind of work.

Scott Wilson gave a drop kick such as none of them had ever seen.

The boys were so astounded that they forgot even to cheer. They waited expectantly in silence for Harry's attempt.

"Rather sorry you went into this, Hunter, I imagine!" said Scott, jeeringly.

"Not at all."

"Bad for your friend, Tom Keene, too."

"Why?"

"Because when I'm captain of the team he'll be promptly fired."

"Ah, but you're not captain yet."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Scott Wilson and Dick Stagg. They thought it was a capital joke.

"Throw me the ball, Jack!" cried Harry.

"Do your best, Harry," whispered Ned.

"Have no fear. I have none."

Confidently Harry Hunter went up to the mark, letting the ball fall to the ground and sending it away like lightning.

The boys held their breath for a moment. Then, when they saw that Harry was the winner, they cheered wildly.

"Hurrah for the new captain!" shouted almost everybody.

"So Harry won? Ah, I'm so glad!" cried Grace Rushton.

"Pshaw!" answered Scott Wilson, vindictively; "the boys will soon find what a poor captain they have. They'll be on their knees to me to help them before they've played a couple of weeks."

He turned away, and calling Dick Stagg, left the field, unable to stay and witness the triumph of his rival.

Under Tom Keene the Pilgrims made rapid progress, so that the trainer looked forward with confidence to the first match that was to be played. This was to take place at Bridgeport, in Connecticut, against the college there.

Scott Wilson was acting as secretary to the team, and he had arranged the game.

They all went to Bridgeport feeling that they would return victorious.

"They're dead easy, Scott says," remarked Ned Rushton.

"Faith, an' it's sorry I am to hear it. I'd like a good foight, Ned."

"Not for the first game, Jack. It's good policy to take on something easy to begin with."

Scott had overheard this talk, and he turned to Dick Stagg, who was by his side.

"Listen, Dick," he said, laughingly. "I've prepared a nice surprise for our Pilgrims."

"Isn't it true what you told them?"

"True! Well, I guess not. Why, our chaps haven't a show with the fellows they're up against to-day. Not a chance."

There were a great many people on the ground to witness the match. All the Bridgeport boys were there to root for their side, and many friends of the Pilgrims had come on from New York.

Mr. Hunter had taken Grace and Katie with him to see the game, and they obtained good seats in one of the stands.

As Harry and the captain of the Bridgeport team stood side by side to toss up for choice of goal, Mr. Hunter felt proud to be the father of such a boy. He looked manly and handsome.

"Are you not glad we came," he said to the girls.

"Oh! Mr. Hunter, I should think so," answered Grace, blushing.

Harry lost the toss, but the Bridgeport captain gave him the kick-off, preferring to choose the goal from which the wind was blowing, for this gave his side a great advantage.

When the teams lined up, it was seen that the Bridgeport men averaged nearly two years older than the Pilgrims, and when Harry noticed this, he felt that Scott Wilson had deceived them, and that there was a hard struggle ahead.

Scott Wilson played full back. Harry and Ned Rushton were the two half backs. Jack Burke was quarter back. Fred Fisk center, the rest of the team playing forward on the line.

Dick Stagg and Matt Murray were the ends, Joe Collins and Will Adams the tackles, and Charley Ware and Frank Swift the guards.

Bridgeport wore light and the Pilgrims dark sweaters, each having the large initial letter of the title on the front.

The ball was placed in the exact center of the field and amid a great cry from the Pilgrims' rooters, Harry Hunter kicked off.

Back came the ball in a moment. It had not gone far, the wind against it being so strong.

Down came the Bridgeport men in a crowd, forcing the line and pressing on toward the Pilgrims' goal.

Harry tackled the man with the ball and threw him on his back.

Then Ned Rushton took the ball and ran with it, but before he had gone a dozen yards he was collared and thrown.

The Bridgeport men had the ball again.

"They're winning, Harry," said Ned.

As they neared the Pilgrims' goal the shouts of their friends among the spectators were deafening.

"Bridgeport! Bridgeport!" they roared.

"Play up, Pilgrim!" was the feeble cry in response.

The ball was close to the Pilgrims' goal now, and no one but Scott Wilson stood between it and the goal. He had a chance to kick, but threw it away, and in a moment the Bridgeport forwards were on him fighting for the ball.

The Bridgeport rooters were fairly crazy now.

Harry, alive to the danger, darted forward, seized the ball with the quickness of lightning, and set off with it, trying with all his might to save his side from defeat.

As Harry ran with the ball held tightly in his arms one of the Bridgeport eleven grasped him around the waist, while another sprang at the ball, which he tried to tear out of the boy's arms.

CHAPTER IV.

A STUBBORN GAME—BRIDGEPORT FIRST.

"Down!" cried several of the players.

The ball and player were fairly held, and the referee blew his whistle.

A scrimmage followed.

"We are in a tight place," said Harry, quickly, as he hurried back to watch what happened. "Play up, men, or they will score!"

There was no need to tell the men to do that.

The last run that Harry had made had put heart in them. It was the first piece of encouragement they had had since the game commenced, and each one resolved to copy his captain's example.

Jack Burke, too, at quarter back, was encouraging the forwards by his cries.

"Put it through, my lads, put it through," he shouted, and

as he did so the Pilgrims' forwards forced the ball out of the scrimmage.

Fred Fisk, the center, was on it in a moment. He made a bold dash with the pigskin, but it was quite impossible for him to force his way through the Bridgeport team.

Quick as lightning he passed the ball to Jack Burke, who had no sooner started to run with it than he was seized by one of the Bridgeport guards and thrown heavily. As he fell the ball rolled from his arms.

"Faith, that was one on me. Begorra, I'll have it in for the man who threw me."

Up to now, by a series of desperate runs, the Pilgrims had kept the ball from their goal, so that Scott Wilson had nothing to do. He was able to look on and calculate the chances.

"They're all in favor of the other fellows," he muttered, "and I'm glad of it."

At this point one of the Bridgeport men was hurt, getting a bad kick on the ankle, which caused him to be carried off the field. This gave rise to some little delay while the substitute was getting ready.

Scott Wilson went up to Harry Hunter, to whom he had not spoken since the ball was kicked off.

"We're in for a bad beating, Hunter," he said.

"Yes, if everybody plays like you," was the answer.

"Scott lost his temper.

"What's the matter with me, I want to know?"

"You want to know! Bosh! you're aware that you fumbled the ball at a critical moment and nearly gave Bridgeport a try. Don't let it happen again, Wilson."

"Do you know who you are speaking to?" asked Scott, white with passion.

"Yes, and I know that I'm your captain. And understand this, as long as I'm captain you'll do what I tell you or get out of the game."

Scott went back to his post astounded. He had never given Harry credit for possessing so much firmness.

"He talks very big now," he said to himself. "Wait until we're snowed under; then he'll change his tune, unless I'm very much mistaken."

The game was continued with great vigor.

Bridgeport played grand football, feeling that they had the match in their own hands. The Pilgrims were entirely on the defensive, and not one man among them, with the exception of Harry, thought that they had any chance to win.

The time for the game had been fixed at twenty-five minutes for each half, with an interval of ten minutes between. Usually in a match game the halves are thirty-five minutes each, but as this was the first game in which either team had appeared that season it had been agreed that the periods should be shortened. At it was, more than one player showed signs of exhaustion.

Fifteen minutes had gone, and neither side had scored.

"If we can hold out fourteen minutes longer, Ned," said Harry to Ned Rushton, "we stand a show."

"Why?"

"Because we change sides, and then we have the wind with us. That's rather different from having it against us."

Harry told several of the players the same thing, and this put new life into them, for they saw the force of it.

The Bridgeport captain had not lost sight of the fact either.

"Get a goal, boys, before we change!" he cried. "Get a goal and make sure of the match."

"We'll get half a dozen goals!" said one of his men.

"Faith, an' it's hoggish I call that!" laughed Jack Burke. "Shure, it's unkind ye are!"

The Bridgeport men worked harder than ever now. Not that they had any fear of losing the game, because even if

they did not score before half time, they hadn't the least doubt about doing so later on.

They felt that their superior weight and the advantage they had in age must tell, and that the Pilgrims would soon be worn out by the tremendous exertions they were compelled to make.

The tide turned against the Pilgrims again.

For some time they had managed to keep the ball in the center of the gridiron, but now the Bridgeport eleven began to force it back toward the enemy's goal.

It is true their advance was slow, but it was there all the same, and this in spite of everything that Harry and his men could do.

Scott Wilson looked for a complete collapse of the Pilgrims' team, to be followed by a series of goals.

The Bridgeport captain had the ball now, and he made a good run with it. It looked at one time as if he would cross the goal line and get a try, but Harry was in his way.

Harry rushed at him, and, grasping him around the waist, brought him down, clinging to him as he fell.

However, he had done great work for his side, for the ball was within fifteen yards of the Pilgrims' goal, and it seemed as if the Bridgeport men would soon force it across the line.

From the scrimmage the ball was driven out toward the Pilgrims' goal, and passing to the right of Scott Wilson, the full back, it went too wide of him to enable him to stop it.

"Get it out, Wilson!" shouted the Pilgrims, as the ball crossed the hill.

If Scott had been quick he might, perhaps, have done this with advantage to his side. But a moment's hesitation was fatal.

In an instant the Bridgeport forwards were on him, and he had to touch down in self-defense.

"A safety!" roared the Bridgeport eleven. "First blood for us!"

The Bridgeport rooters gave a deafening yell, and the friends of the Pilgrims were too disheartened to make much of a noise in return.

Mr. Hunter looked very downcast, and as for Grace she would not trust herself to speak for fear of showing how much she felt Harry's defeat. Katie Clare was more light-hearted, and she waved her handkerchief from time to time at Ned Rushton and Jack Burke, her two particular friends, and kept up a smiling face.

A safety counted for two points against the Pilgrims, and though this was not much in itself it was serious, as showing the weakness of the team. Even Harry began to doubt the possibility of staving off defeat.

The ball was brought out twenty-five yards and kicked off, and the game began again with great vigor.

Time after time Bridgeport only escaped scoring by a hair's breadth. Several attempts were made to kick a goal from the field, and each time the Pilgrims were saved by the wind carrying the ball away from the goal posts.

Once Scott Wilson had to touch down again. This second safety made the score 4 to 0 in favor of Bridgeport.

"Five minutes more for the first half," said the linesman, and at it the two elevens went harder than ever. The Bridgeport team worked frantically, and nothing but the strong defense made against them saved the Pilgrims. The ball was in the latter's goal incessantly.

"Do you think our side has any chance, Mr. Hunter?" asked Katie Clare.

"Chance!" cried Bob Field, the mascot, breaking in without giving Harry's father time to reply. "Why, we shall win, of course. As if Harry could be beaten!"

Mr. Hunter was touched by this great confidence given to his son, but he could not honestly say he thought the Pilgrims

had any chance. Grace was still silent, watching the game intently.

"Hurrah!" cried Rob Field.

"What's the matter, Rob?" asked Grace, quickly. "Has our chum scored?"

"No, no."

"Then, what is it? Tell me."

"Why, Grace, our fellows have held their own for the first half of the game. That's over now, and when they begin again they'll have the wind in their favor. Hurrah! the game's ours. See if it isn't?"

Certainly, there seemed to be a good deal of sound sense in Bob's reasoning, and the visitors from New York grew a little more hopeful about the result.

CHAPTER V.

HARRY'S GREAT RUN—BOB FIELD CHRISTENS HIM.

Harry was not so cheerful.

He realized that his men were about done up. Their exertions had told on them terribly, and several of the team were completely exhausted.

"Brace up, men," he said, trying to encourage them.

"Recollect, we have everything in our favor now. Everything! and it's our own fault if we don't win."

"Shure, I'll disown ye," cried Jack Burke, "if ye let these men bate ye."

"What's the good of talking in this way," said Scott Wilson. "We know we're against a better lot than ourselves, and we ought to be thankful we got on so well. That's the way I look at it."

"Begorra, an' it's natural ye should, Scott, my lad, it's grit ye want. I'm afther thinkin' ye're pretty much of a quitter."

"A quitter!" cried Scott, rushing toward him. "You call me that?"

"Stop! We can't have any fighting here," said Harry sternly. "Keep all your breath for the play. You'll want it all, take my word for it."

The game began again now, and it had not proceeded far, when Harry saw that his fears were well grounded.

His men were greatly exhausted. Even with the wind in their favor they could not hold their own, and naturally it was to be expected that every moment they would get worse, weakening through the intense strain to which they were put.

However, Bridgeport had not scored again. Five minutes' play only remained, and the score was still 4 to 0. Some of the Pilgrims were satisfied with this state of affairs, thinking it might have been very much worse, but this kind of reasoning did not satisfy Harry.

He worked harder than ever.

One of his men took the ball at least fifty yards, and brought forth a deafening cry from the Pilgrims' rooters.

Again the Bridgeport men brought the pigskin back again by a series of short runs and downs.

"Not five minutes," muttered Harry. "Shall I have another chance?"

He followed up the ball closely, keeping of course outside the scrimmage, waiting an opportunity to secure it.

Suddenly, almost before the field knew it, he had the ball under his arm, and with it was dashing away toward the Bridgeport goal.

"Well run! well run!" came from all parts of the field.

The Bridgeport half backs ran to meet him with their forwards whom he had passed in hot pursuit. He flew by one of

the enemy's half backs, then charging the other he sent him flying to the ground.

Full back alone remained to bar the way.

He was no match for Harry, being a heavy man without much activity.

Harry, nearing him, made a feint. Then, quick as lightning, he dodged to the right, made a dash forward, and amid a wild burst of cheering crossed the line with the ball.

"A try! a try!" shouted the Pilgrims. "The game's ours after all."

"Ye're a broth of a boy, Harry," cried Jack Burke, patting him on the back, "an' bedad, it's meself's not the only one who thinks so. Shure, there's a pair of bright eyes lookin' at ye from the stand over there."

And Jack, wild with joy, waved his hand to the two girls.

"Ned, you place the ball," said Harry.

So Ned took the ball out into play and very carefully placed it, waiting Harry's signal to put it on the ground.

Then, as Harry kicked, the Bridgeport team charged out from their goal toward the ball, hoping he might kick low, and that they would be able to stop it.

"A goal! a goal!" cried a thousand throats, as the ball, aimed with great accuracy, went right across the bar between the goal posts.

Almost at the same instant the referee's whistle blew, and the game was over.

"Three cheers for 'Half Back Harry!'" piped little Bob Field in his shrill voice.

"Half Back Harry," cried Jack Burke, with a laugh. "Faith, that's a mighty good name."

"Hello, Scotty!" shouted Bob, "this wasn't one of your days, I'm thinking."

Scott Wilson was mad enough before, and what Bob Field said to him did not improve his temper.

He rushed over to the youngster.

"What did you call me?" he asked, savagely.

"Called you Scotty, of course."

"You did, did you. By jingo, you impudent young cur, I'll thrash you. My name is Scott, and I want everybody to know it."

Scott Wilson had seized Bob Field by the collar of his coat, and the little fellow was wriggling like an eel to get away from him.

Jack Burke walked up quickly.

"What are ye afther doin' wid the lad?" he asked.

"Going to thrash him. He was insolent and reserves a beating. I don't have anybody call me out of my name."

"Shure, ye'd betther be after tryin' your hand at me first, Scotty," said Jack Burke, with provoking coolness, as he smiled at Scott Wilson.

"Come on, Scott," said Dick Stagg, running up. "Wait your chance," he whispered. "You'll have an opportunity."

Scott released Bob Field at once.

"You can't bluff me, Jack Burke," he said, savagely. "If I were back at New York I'd have it out with you now. The reason I don't is because I don't want the Bridgeport fellows to have a bad impression of us, but you shall hear from me, Burke, all the same. Don't forget that."

Ned Rushton and Harry were talking to the two girls and Mr. Hunter. The last named was all smiles now.

"I thought you didn't approve of football, sir," said Ned Rushton.

"But I do, Ned—when you win," added Mr. Hunter, with a twinkling eye; "only I must say, my lads, you had a very close call."

The Bridgeport men were good losers, and the captain of the team came right up and congratulated Harry.

"I hear your fellows have christened you 'Half Back

'Harry,' he said, "and there couldn't be a better name. I never saw finer play at half back anywhere."

So the return to New York was a triumph, and every one felt in the best of spirits except Scott Wilson and Dick Stagg.

As for Tom Keene, the coach and trainer, his feelings may be imagined. The veteran athlete prophesied a very successful season for the lads under his charge, and it was certain that he would spare no effort to make the tour a complete success.

As they were separating at the Grand Central Depot at New York Grace Rushton happened to be near Scott Wilson.

"Didn't Harry play well?" she said, quite innocently, not having the slightest intention to offend him.

"He wasn't the only one," he answered crossly.

"Of course not. I didn't mean that he was, only there's no denying that his great run won the game for our side."

Scott could say nothing in reply, knowing well that there was no possible answer, so true was it that Harry had saved his side from defeat, and this enraged him more than ever.

He growled, rather than said good-by, as he left Grace, and went up to Dick Stagg.

"Come around to my house to-morrow morning."

"For what, Scott?" asked Dick.

"Wait and see."

Scott walked away quickly.

"He's in a precious bad temper," said Dick, looking after him. "What a thing jealousy is!" he added, with a laugh. "Thank goodness, I was never in love, and I guess I'm all the happier for it. Wonder what Scott wants of me? Something crooked, I expect. Well, he'd ask in vain if I weren't so much in his debt."

"Were you satisfied, Harry?" asked Ned Rushton.

"Yes, for a first game, I was. We had a very strong team against us, and we shall certainly do better next time. Tom Keene says so. Good-night, Ned, old fellow, I'm tired."

And Harry, leaving his chum, went home.

CHAPTER VI.

PLOTTING AGAINST HALF BACK HARRY—PLAYING THE HAMILTON CLUB.

Dick Stagg was an early caller at Scott Wilson's house.

As was said, Scott's father was a very wealthy man, and the boy lived with him at a magnificent mansion in Fifth avenue, which was furnished in the most costly fashion. All this luxury had an effect on Dick, who was poor and needy.

"I'm on time, Scott," he said, as he entered his friend's room.

"You generally are," sneered the other, "when there's anything to be got."

Dick flushed.

"By jingo!" he said to himself. "How I wish I were out of his debt so that I could tell him what I thought of him." Then he added aloud: "I wasn't aware I stood a chance of getting anything. Have you any scheme on foot, Scott?"

"Perhaps," was the mysterious answer.

"Anything to do with Harry Hunter, 'Half Back Harry,' as they call him?"

"What made you ask that?"

"Because I know you don't love him."

"I hate him, Dick, I hate him!"

"That's where you and Grace Rushton differ," was Dick's cool reply.

This answer put Scott in a terrible passion, as no doubt he intended it should, and as he watched Scott's rage he smiled

with satisfaction, for he dearly loved to irritate him, taking care not to go beyond certain limits.

"Now, look here, Dick," said Scott, becoming calmer, "we don't want to sit here and rile each other. There's no kind of sense in you and me doing that."

"You began it."

"Very well. I'll be the first to end it."

"This pleasant temper of his," muttered Dick, "shows that he needs me. Wonder why?"

"Dick, I've been a pretty good friend to you, I believe."

"Of course, you have, Scott."

"I don't say this in order to parade my goodness, or to make you feel bad about it. Now, see this, Dick, you can do something for me to get quits with me at once, if you like."

"You mean that I can get out of your debt?" exclaimed Dick, delighted at what he heard.

"Yes."

"That's a deal?"

"I said so. Do what I ask of you, and I hand you a receipt in full for all the money you've borrowed."

"Old fellow, that's very good of you."

"Not at all, not at all."

"But you said I must do something for you?"

"Sure. I don't hand over notes for several thousand dollars without having something in return."

"Let me know what it is and I will certainly do it if I can."

"Half Back Harry, as you call him," said Scott sneeringly, "is in my way. You must get him out of it."

"But how?"

"I want him to leave the football team."

"Scott, don't you think you're a bit crazy. Leave the eleven! Why, his whole thoughts are centered on it. It was his idea, and you can't expect him to abandon it."

"He must, I tell you."

"I don't see how. No one can persuade him to do so. I believe he'd give up Grace Rushton sooner."

"Dick, you and I had better understand one another at once. There's no talk of persuasion in the matter. I am not such a fool as to imagine that Harry Hunter would get out of this game. But he may be made to do so."

"I'm in the dark still, Scott."

"Supposing he met with an accident? He may break a leg, or an arm, or his head, for the matter of that. Now do you understand?"

"Not a word."

"Pshaw! what a trouble I have to explain myself to you."

"Because you are so mysterious, Scott. Why, any of us may meet with an accident."

"Not the kind that I want him to fall a victim to."

Scott rose.

"The long and the short of it is," he said, "that you must do the business, Dick. You must lie in wait for the fellow somewhere in the dark, and break his arm or head with a club."

"I will not do it!" cried Dick, springing up. "Never! You can't get me to do that kind of work."

"Then I shall expose you to your uncle. If he knows you have borrowed money, he will kick you out of doors, and you won't have a cent. As sure as my name is Scott Wilson, I will do it."

"Can't this thing be worked in the next football game?" asked Dick, frightened at the prospect. "Ah! here's your friend David Reed, or 'Slick Dave' coming to see you."

The whole state of the case was put before Slick Dave without delay, and he listened very attentively.

"Seems to me," he said, "it's only a matter of money," when he heard the whole story. "You want Half Back Harry put out of the game. What's it worth?"

"Five hundred dollars."

"I'll do it for a thousand."

"You shall have it!" cried Scott. "Get to work Dave, and finish him."

"Stop! you don't quite understand me. I'm not a tough. I don't do this thing myself."

"Then, how's it to be done?" exclaimed Scott Wilson.

"Who do you play on Saturday?"

"The Hamilton Club!"

"Where?"

"Prospect Park, Brooklyn."

"Do you know the names of the men who will play against you?"

"I could get them, no doubt."

"Wish you had them here."

"Stop! I forgot. Here's the list."

"Read them to me. I'm not much of a hand at that kind of work."

Dave listened very attentively while Scott was reading, and never said a word until he had come to the end.

"I have found the man," he said.

"What man?"

Both Dick and Scott were at a loss to know what Dave meant.

"The fellow who will work the game on Harry Hunter. His name is Ben Dawson, and he's a bad lot. I am dead sure of him."

"But how will it be done?"

"Can't say at present."

"I want to know."

"Don't be so impatient. I don't know myself yet. I'll have to fix matters up with Ben, but you may be sure that the thing will be done. I'll go right away and see him now."

Knowing what sort of person Slick Dave was, Scott felt easier in his mind, and Dick confessed to himself that the game against the Hamilton Club would be the last that Harry would play in.

The team that met the Hamiltons was the same as that which played against the Bridgeport, with two exceptions, and all the eleven expected an easier time than they had had before.

The newspaper reports of the game at Bridgeport had given a good deal of interest to the doings of the teams, and as the weather was fine a great crowd collected to watch the play.

Scott Wilson looked anxiously around for Slick Dave, and when he could find him, he ran over to him that he would like to speak to him, so Dave managed to get near.

"Is it arranged?" said Scott, anxiously.

"Yes."

"How?"

"We have a good plan. If one fellow angrier will be used at once. Keep your eye open, Mr. Wilson, and you'll get into Ben Dawson's game pretty quick."

Scott had to be content with this explanation, which was the only one Dave would give, so when the game was started he watched Ben Dawson very closely to try to get a pointer on his plan.

He saw that Ben had marked Harry and never seemed to get away from him.

"I wonder what he's going to do?" asked Scott, anxiously.

Evidently Ben was waiting his opportunity, and this Scott knew.

Harry ran with the ball, and in doing so he tripped and fell. The ball rolled from his arm, and as he lay on the grass he was between the pluckin and Ben Dawson.

The latter made a savage leap forward with the evident intention of getting the ball, but instead of clearing Harry as

he lay, it was evident he would fall short, and land with all his weight on Harry's stomach.

"Harry! Harry! you'll be killed!" shouted Ned Rushton. The players looked on in horror.

CHAPTER VII

JACK BURKE SAVES "HALF BACK HARRY"—THE CHAMPION HURT

"That fixes him!" exclaimed Scott Wilson, delighted with what he saw.

If anyone had been near, this incautious speech must have been heard. Scott had witnessed the danger in which "Half Back Harry" was, and had been carried away by his feelings.

From many of the boys there was an angry cry.

"That's not football," shouted Fred Flisk.

"Harry will be killed," cried another.

Certainly "Half Back Harry's" danger was great, for it seemed certain that Ben Dawson would land with his full weight on the boy's stomach.

"Save yourself!" cried another boy, giving advice which it was quite impossible to adopt.

"Save himself, is it?" shouted Jack Burke. "Faith, an' it's better to save him, I'm thinkin'."

With that, Jack rushing like a demon on the scene, dashed at Ben Dawson with such force, that the two boys colliding, they fell backwards in opposite directions.

Both were shaken severely, but Harry was saved, and so Jack Burke did not mind the result.

Harry sprang to his feet in a rage.

"Do you call this football?" he demanded, addressing himself to Ben Dawson, who had risen and was rubbing his head. "If you do, then you and I have different opinions about the game."

"I don't understand you," answered Ben Dawson, defiantly.

"You tried to cripple me, deny it if you can."

"I do deny it most solemnly. I had no such intention. The ball was beyond you, and I rushed forward to get to it. You happened to be lying in my way, so I determined to jump over you."

"On me, you mean?"

"I mean nothing of the sort. How dare you say such a thing?"

Ben put up his fists as he said this, and appeared anxious to fight.

"Play! play!" shouted a number of men at this, and the referee blew his whistle.

"We'll settle this some other time."

"Whenever you like, Ben Dawson," answered Harry, as he ran back to his position at half back.

There was but one opinion amongst the spectators.

Ben Dawson's style of play was universally condemned, and many of those present kept their eyes upon him to see if there would be any repetition of those cowardly tactics.

Ben felt that he was being watched, and so he was very careful.

Scott Wilson had given him a signal not to attempt anything more that day, but Ben Dawson did not need this warning.

It is but doing the Hamilton Club justice to say that they had no sympathy with Ben's proceedings, although there were two or three players on the team who thought he had been condemned without just cause. Half time came, and neither side had scored, showing that it was a well-fought game.

The players clustered in groups, discussing the exciting

incident that had nearly ended "Half Back Harry's" football career.

Grace Rushton and Katie Clare came down the gridiron to talk to some of the boys with whom they were acquainted, and Bob Field, the little mascot of the team, was with them.

"You're not hurt, Harry?" asked Grace, anxiously, "are you?"

"Not a scratch, Grace."

"But you had a narrow escape?"

"Very."

"Your father says the referee failed in his duty, for not putting Ben Dawson out of the game. He should have been disqualified."

"Then you don't think it was an accident, Grace?"

"Accident! why, of course not."

"Why, Harry," said Katie, "we saw it all. It was a deliberate attempt to injure you."

"That's bad," remarked Harry, seriously. "I'm sorry to have my own opinion confirmed. I didn't think any of the fellows we play against would sink so low as that. Why, what could be his motive?"

"Some grudge he has against you."

"It can't be, Grace. I never saw him in my life before."

"Shure, an' it's a nice man he's afther spakin' to now."

"Who's that, Jack?"

"What! Is it yourself that doesn't know Dave Reed—'Slick Dave'—Scott Wilson's friend?"

"No friend of mine!" cried Scott hotly.

He was standing near and had heard what was said.

"Faith, it was yourself that wished him to train us, anyway."

"That's quite another matter. I know him to be a perfectly competent man as a trainer—superior, in my opinion, to Tom Keene. That's a very different thing from being my friend," said Scott, loftily, as he walked away. "I choose my friends from another class, Jack Burke."

"An' it's a foine collection ye have."

"That, Jack!" cried Harry; "we don't want any more fighting. He didn't hear what you said, so that's all right."

Scott walked over to Dick Stagg, his particular chum.

"He bungled it."

"So I saw, and it wasn't very cleverly done either. He attracted too much notice. What's going to happen now?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, is Ben Dawson to make another attempt on Harry?"

"I should hope not. If he does he won't get off so easily. For his sake I hope he'll have more sense."

"And for yours, Scott."

"Why for mine?"

"Because if he's caught trying to cripple "Half Back Harry" he may spread, and then where would you be? Rather awkward for you, Scott, eh?"

"But I gave him a signal to do nothing more."

"Suppose he never saw it?"

"Go to him, Dick," said Scott, anxiously. "I dare not be seen speaking to him. Tell him to keep away from Harry."

"Right."

Dick saw that this caution was, and he lost no time in following his friend's advice. He wanted to be with Ben Dawson as short a time as possible, so he wanted no words on him.

"I'll meet you, Dawson," he said, quickly. "No more attacks on Harry Hunter to-day."

"Right! Is you think I'm an ill? Tell Wilson that's all right. The playing part the rest of the game."

"I'll make a note of it."

Dick walked off.

He had just reached the end of the field when he saw that

in keeping all his eggs in one basket. Something may happen yet."

Dick and Scott didn't know what to make of this last statement, and it was quite out of the question to go to Dave Reed and ask for an explanation.

Besides the ball was about to be put in play again, and the captains of the two teams were calling to their men to line up for the fight.

"Half Back Harry's" team, the Pilgrims, were determined to win, and so they played better than before, stopping every rush of Hamilton, and gradually driving them back to their goal.

Jack Burke, Ned Rushton and "Half Back Harry" especially were prominent now. Each of them had made a great run with the ball, but Hamilton had played well, and no man had been able to cross the line.

The rooters for each club shouted themselves hoarse.

"Get the ball through, you fellows!" shouted "Half Back Harry."

Dick Stagg and Scott Wilson were watching Harry keenly, bearing in mind Ben Dawson's words, and they were wondering what was going to happen to him.

Suddenly there was a tremendous roar from all parts of the field.

"Half Back Harry" had captured the ball, and had started on one of his famous runs. Down the gridiron he went, passing half of the Hamilton team and getting nearer their goal at every stride.

The Hamilton full back and the left half back had rushed across the field to stop him, and these two, with the right half back, reached him just as he was about to cross the line.

Down came Harry headlong a moment later, and as he did so one of the half backs launched a tremendous kick at the ball.

"A try! A try!" shouted the Pilgrims.

Just as they said these words a dull sound was heard, followed by a deep groan, and the next instant a cry of mingled horror and rage arose, for Harry Hunter was lying motionless on the grass with blood flowing from his head.

CHAPTER VIII

HARRY CARRIED OFF THE GROUND—JACK BURKE PROTECTS BOB FIELD

"You coward!" shouted Scott Wilson.

Playing full back he was a long way behind the line, and so it was wonderful how he had been able to see what had taken place. However, his exclamation seemed to show that he had.

He came rushing down the gridiron towards the Hamilton goal, and passing through the crowd, he sprang furiously at the player who had kicked Harry.

Two or three men who saw the movement tried to get between, and though they did not quite succeed in stopping him, they interfered with the force of the blow he aimed at the Hamilton half back.

"You coward," replied Scott Wilson, as the half back rushed, and Scott attempted to get at him again. "The ball is the thing to be kicked, not our captain's head."

Jack Burke and Ned Rushton were startled at the way in which Scott championed "Half Back Harry," for they had never expected it of him.

"Faith, he's not as black as he's painted," whispered Jack. Ned was on the ground looking over Harry, who was lying with his white face upturned and his eyes closed.

"Harry, Harry," exclaimed Ned, anxiously, "are you much hurt?"

But no answer came, and then the boys became alarmed.

"He's unconscious!" cried several.

"Is there a doctor here?" shouted the captain of the Hamilton team, running over to the spot where the crowd appeared to be greatest.

"Why?"

"Because one of the fellows is hurt, badly, I think."

"Who is it?"

"'Half Back Harry'."

There was a faint scream, and at the same instant Mr. Hunter forced his way through the crowd to the gridiron, a young man following at his heels.

"Where is he?" asked the young man.

"Who are you?"

"A doctor. Let me see what I can do."

Harry was pronounced to be in a serious condition, and it was determined that he should be taken to his home at once. Mr. Hunter and the young doctor went in the carriage with him, Ned Rushton staying behind to take care of his sister and Katie Clare.

"Cheer up, Grace," said Katie.

"I'm doing my best, Katie, but it's very hard. Do you think anyone heard me scream?"

"No, no, there was too much excitement."

"I'm glad of that. I don't want to attract notice. I couldn't help it. Oh! Ned, Ned, will Harry get better?"

"What a question to ask, Grace, dear. Why, of course, he will."

The words were right enough, but there was a serious look on her brother's face which distressed Grace.

"I'll be back in a moment, girls," cried Ned.

"You're not leaving us?"

"Yes, I must for a minute, that's all. Harry got a try, and I'm going to see if I can't make a goal of it."

Ned ran back to the gridiron.

There he found a dispute was going on. Ben Dawson was disputing the try, claiming that the ball had rolled out of Harry's arms before he had crossed the line.

Jack Burke appealed to the referee.

"A try, beyond a doubt," was the verdict, given without hesitation.

"Hurray! one game!" shouted Fred Fisk.

"Faith, it's that news will be the best medicine for 'Half Back Harry,'" cried Jack Burke, "an', begorra, Ned, darlin', if ye make a goal of it, it'll act on him like a charm."

Jack brought the ball out and placed it in position, Ned Rushton doing the kicking. So well did he aim that the pigskin went right over the bar in the very center.

The crowd shouted, drowning the cries of the Pilgrims, and the Hamiltons ran out ready to resume play.

"When I kick off, lads," cried the Hamilton captain, "follow up the ball."

"Play over?" asked Fred Fisk.

"I have not said so," answered the referee.

"There are four minutes left," the line-man announced.

"Time enough to spare, naturally!" shouted the Hamiltons.

No more time, certainly. Only four minutes, but the Hamiltons felt that "Half Back Harry" was out of the game, and, in their opinion, this made a vast difference.

However, a good substitute was found for Harry, and the team prevented the Hamiltons from scoring.

Scott Wilson played better than he had ever done before, defeating the opposition. Scott took this opportunity of showing what he could.

Then the referee called the game, and the match ended in

favor of the Pilgrims by six points to nothing, and so Harry's try, which he had gained at such fearful cost to himself, won the game for his side.

Ned ran to the dressing-room near the park entrance, telling his sister he would be ready in a few minutes, and Jack Burke followed more leisurely.

As he was walking up the steps that led to the dressing-room at the side of the building, he thought he heard voices that were familiar to him.

"Faith, it's quarrellin' they are," said Jack, "an', begorra, Scott Wilson's one of 'em."

Jack hurried to the back of the dressing-room, which was the point from which the sounds came, and there he was astounded to see Scott Wilson holding Bob Field by the collar.

"Let me go, let me go," cried Bob, who was such a little fellow that his head did not reach Scott's shoulder.

"Not till I've given you a sound thrashing," was Scott's savage reply, hissed through his teeth. "I'll give you a lesson once for all. You want to be taught manners, and I'm the fellow to do it."

"Whist!" cried Jack, bursting on the scene, "but this won't do."

Scott glared angrily at the speaker.

"Don't meddle with what doesn't concern you, Burke," he said angrily.

"Shure, but it does concern me," Mither Wilson, an' I'm afther askin' ye the manin' of it."

"He's a brute," cried Bob Field, wriggling out of Scott's clutches as he paid this compliment. "A big brute, that's what he is."

"So you encourage this little wretch in his insolence, do you, Burke?"

"Wilson, I'm askin' you what's happened."

"I'll tell you, Jack," cried Bob. "I came up to him a few minutes ago and said: 'That was a fine bit of acting, Scotty'."

"Say 'Scotty' again," shouted Scott Wilson, savagely, "and I'll cripple you."

"Oh, no, you won't," said Jack Burke, stepping forward. "Troth, an' it's in the dark I am still, Bob. I don't know what ye're afther manin'."

"Jack, you saw how he carried on when 'Half Back Harry' was hurt. That was all acting. He didn't mean any of it, and I told him so. The fellow who kicked Harry was a friend of Slick Dave's, Scott Wilson's tool. I know what I think, and I'll say it, too, in spite of all the Scott Wilsons in the world."

This was more than Scott could endure, so he made a leap towards Bob Field, aiming a savage blow at him as he did so.

"Faith, it's an obstinate chap ye are," said Jack Burke. "Ye won't take advice, Wilson, an' I'm thinkin' ye'll be afther gettin' hurt."

"Out of my way!" roared Scott, livid with passion.

Jack Burke stood his ground, shielding little Bob Field, who had sheltered himself behind the big Irish boy.

"You won't, eh?"

"No."

Jack snapped at the word defiantly, and Scott, boiling with rage, rushed at him.

"Down!" cried Jack, with a laugh, using a football term, as his right foot shot out and landed between Scott's eyes, sending the latter heavily to the ground.

"That's not a dog!" shouted Bob Field, dancing gleefully around, "that's a fellow!"

And then, before any further blow could be struck, the players rushed out of the dressing-room, leaving the noise, and finished on the team being sent.

CHAPTER IX

CHOOSING A NEW CAPTAIN—A SURPRISE

Scott Wilson's feelings had sustained more injury than his body.

Beyond a slight mark on his face there was nothing to recall the defeat he had met with. But his pride was deeply touched, and he was furious with rage when he remembered that Bob Field had been a witness of what had taken place.

However, a few words whispered in his ear by Dick Stagg turned his thoughts into another direction.

"He's in a very bad state, Scott," said Dick.

"Who?"

"Why, 'Half Back Harry,' of course."

Scott forgot his own pain in the pleasure this news gave him.

"Do you know this for certain?" he asked, eagerly.

"My authority is Fred Fisk. He says he heard the doctors say it was doubtful if Harry Hunter would recover. I hope that's not true."

"Why?"

"Because, Scott, killing a fellow is carrying the thing too far. That's frightful."

Scott laughed and finished dressing himself.

"I suppose those fellows will want to be paid," he said, as he walked away towards the trolley car with Dick.

"Sure."

"They mustn't come to my house! That wouldn't do at all!" exclaimed Scott Wilson quickly. "I mustn't be mixed up in the matter."

"That's all right. Give me the money, and I will hand it to Slick Dave."

"Right. Guess I'll go home, Dick. Come round in the morning, and, if you can find out anything about Hunter's condition in the meantime, I shall be glad. Good-night."

The talk between the two boys had had a listener.

Bob Field's suspicions had been aroused by what had passed during the game, and he had determined to watch the two people he suspected.

The few words that had been said had more than confirmed what was in his mind, and made him very anxious to follow the matter up.

He kept close to Dick Stagg, not losing sight of him until they reached New York. When they came to Madison Square, Bob saw Slick Dave standing outside the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and, as Dick also saw him, the latter went over to the sport at once.

"You did your work well, Dave," said Dick, standing at the entrance to the hotel to do the talking.

Bob Field, behind one of the pillars, could hear everything that went on.

"He's satisfied, is he?" asked Dave.

"Yes. I think you overdid it. There's a talk about Hunter dying."

Dave Reed turned pale.

He started around hurriedly.

"Slick Dave," he said, in alarm. "This may be a branching matter for some body."

Dick Stagg realized then how serious the matter was, and he remembered that he had mixed up with it.

"Give me the money, and let us separate," said Dave, quickly.

"Tomorrow morning you shall have it. Be certain my horse at twelve o'clock."

The two confederates parted instantly, apparently treating

to be seen together, and Bob Field, indignant at what he had heard, ran away to bear the news to Ned Rushton.

There he found Ned sitting with Grace, Katie, and Jack Burke. They had just returned from "Half Back Harry's," and they were astounded at Bob Field's story.

"Faith, it's behind the bars we can put them," cried Jack Burke.

"To think that Scott would do such a terrible thing," said Grace. "I can't understand it."

"Shure, an' I can, Gracie. Scott's a bad egg, an' faith, he can't keep straight."

Jack started up, reaching for his hat as he did so.

"Where are you going?" cried the others.

"Arrah, an' it's a foolish question ye're afther askin'. It's a policeman I'm goin' to see, an' he'll arrest Slick Dave an' all the gang."

Ned jumped up and pushed him back in his seat.

"That won't do, Jack," he cried.

"Won't do?"

"I should think not. We've no proof."

"Bob has."

"No. What Bob heard shows that there has been some crooked work, but that is all. We can't bring it home in a legal way against anybody."

"Begorra, it's in an illegal way then. I'll bring it home wid this."

And Jack shook the fist that had, a few hours before, shown Scott Wilson what it could do.

They all laughed at Jack.

"We're laughing," exclaimed Ned Rushton, suddenly sobering down, but after all it's no laughing matter, for Harry's hurt badly, I'm told."

"An' we're to do nothin'?" asked Jack, discontentedly.

"We must wait and watch. Keep our eyes open, and perhaps we may get proof. We don't want to cause a scandal without reason."

The reports of Harry's condition on the three following days were not encouraging.

No one was allowed to see him, as the doctors said he must be kept perfectly quiet.

Ned Rushton received a letter from Scott Wilson. It arrived whilst Ned was with Jack Burke, Fred Fisk, and some other members of the team. Dick Stagg brought it.

"Read it out, Ned," cried Fred Fisk.

"DEAR RUSHTON:

"What is to be done with regard to our game against Elizabeth on Saturday next? Of course we should play it, but as Hunter is out of the team, it is necessary to have another captain, and he should be chosen without delay.

"SCOTT WILSON."

"So it's Harry's shoes he's 'afther!" cried Jack Burke. "Faith, they wouldn't fit him."

"Burke's very amusing, no doubt," said Dick Stagg, "but I think it better to be a little serious. It seems to me that Scott has done quite right. A captain must be chosen."

Now to do this Ned and Fred Fisk could make no objection, only they wished the decision put off until the day of the match.

"We shall be all together, then," said Ned, "and can make our decision in a few minutes."

Dick went back and told Scott what was decided, and he seemed quite satisfied.

Still no one was allowed to see Harry, but even his team found Ned Rushton, and so the day brought him in a cruel condition. Some of them wanted to put him to rest altogether, and went round to Harry's room. A

message came promptly from him begging them not to do so. Accordingly the following Saturday found the Pilgrims at Elizabeth, in Jersey, ready for the game.

"Now let's get this business over!" cried Scott Wilson. "Who's to be captain?"

"Ned Rushton!" cried several.

"Why Ned, of course," said Fred Fisk. "Who else could we have in 'Half Back Harry's' place?"

"Shure, it's all settled!" cried Jack Burke. "Hooroo for the new captain, Ned Rushton!"

"Not so fast, not so fast," said Dick Stagg. "You and Fred Fisk are not the whole team. There are others who want to have a say."

"But who else can we choose?"

"As you ask me a straight question, Fred," replied Dick, "I'll give you a straight answer. I'm for Scott Wilson, first, last and all the time."

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Jack Burke, Ned Rushton and Fred Fisk were astounded. The shouts of approval the proposal met with showed that a good many members of the team favored Scott Wilson.

They did not know that Scott and Dick had been busily engaged for several days working on these boys with all kinds of promises, and that many of them had been won over.

"Wilson will be chosen," whispered Fred Fisk, aghast at the turn of events.

"Faith, I'll leave the field. I won't play under him."

"Come, come," cried Dick Stagg. "Let us decide this business."

"Vote—vote!" shouted various members of the team.

"Those in favor of Ned Rushton for captain will please hold up their hands."

Four hands, including that of the speaker, went up.

"We're beaten," gasped Fred.

Dick and Scott wore smiling faces now, for the victory was certain.

"Now, those in favor of Scott Wil——"

"Come on, boys, hurry up, let's get on the gridiron; the other fellows are waiting."

All eyes turned in the direction of the speaker, and the boys saw "Half Back Harry" himself coming towards them.

CHAPTER X

A GREAT GAME AT ELIZABETH—THE PILGRIMS SCORED AGAINST

"You're here!" exclaimed Scott Wilson, in amazement.

"Yes," answered "Half Back Harry," laughingly. "I take a lot of exercise. But tell me what all this talk is about?"

The question was rather embarrassing, and for a few moments no one spoke. Jack Burke broke the silence.

"Shure, Harry," he said, "It's dead they had ye, an' faith, ye an' that captain was being elected."

"Oh, that was it," answered "Half Back Harry." "Well, shure, ye an' I'm neither dead nor dying, there's no need to be taken with the shollen."

Scott Wilson was red with rage.

He was a little loath to let Harry return just as he was on the point of accepting to the post of captain of the Pilgrims.

Harry was dumb, and he was by no means ready to submit, so he asked his friends for some pretext.

A look at "Half Back Harry" provided him with one.

The captain of the Pilgrims was very pale, this absence of color being due to his recent illness.

"We want to win this match, don't we?" asked Scott.

"Of course we do. We don't play to lose."

"I don't want to make any unpleasant remark, but you have only to look at Hunter to see he's not in a fit condition to captain us to-day. Why, Rushton, Burke, you pretend to be friends of his; so do you, Fisk."

"Certainly we are. What of it?" asked Ned Rushton.

"Why, this. A real friend would prevent Hunter from playing to-day, for fear his doing so might work serious injury to him."

"That's quite enough, Wilson," cried "Half Back Harry." "One would think I was a child from the way you are talking. I play to-day," he added firmly, "and those who want to be in the game had better come out on the gridiron, for I'm going to toss up for kick off."

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried most of the team, delighted to have him back with them again and proud of the grit he showed.

Some of the Elizabeth team came over.

"What's all this shouting for? Do you think the game's yours before it's started?" asked one man.

"Our captain's here—'Half Back Harry.'"

The Elizabeth player ran back and told his comrades the news, for of course they had all heard of Harry's injury in the game at Prospect Park.

"He looks very sick," said one man.

"Scott Wilson says he isn't fit to play," remarked another.

"That's not our business," retorted the Elizabeth captain. "If the Pilgrims are satisfied to have him, why should we object? It looks to me as if this game was a gift for us."

Harry lost the toss, and as there was a heavy wind blowing, the Elizabeth captain naturally gave the Pilgrims the kickoff, preferring to have choice of goal.

"A bit of bad luck, boys," said "Half Back Harry," "to lose the toss."

"Faith, we'll play all the harder, and begorra, that'll even up things."

"You always know how to get out of a difficulty, Jack," laughed Harry.

"An' how to get in one."

The boys all laughed, for Jack had a habit of getting into more scrapes than all the rest of the team combined.

Fred Fisk kicked off, and the Pilgrims followed up the kick instantly, carrying the ball well into the territory of the enemy.

"We're all right, Harry," cried Ned Rushton. "Look what our fellows are doing, and the wind against them, too. Why, they'll have it over the line in a moment, see if they don't."

"It's great! Hurrah! Jack has it!"

"No, no; he's lost the ball. Hello! What's this?"

The aspect of the game had altered in a minute.

The Elizabeth captain had taken the ball from Jack Burke, and away he came through the Pilgrims' forwards, running at great speed, amid the most tremendous shouting from the crowd.

"A goal, a goal!" cried the Elizabeth rooters.

He was going towards New Rushton with the ball, having chosen that side of the gridiron to avoid "Half Back Harry," thinking Ned was easier to deal with.

Harry, quick as lightning, flew across the field, getting between Ned and Scott Wilson, who was playing full back, as usual.

Scott had a grim smile on his face. He was hoping that the Elizabeth player would run against "Half Back Harry" with such violence as to put him out of the game.

"It won't take much of a blow to do it either," said Scott to himself. "Ha! they're gone."

The Elizabeth captain had dashed Ned Rushton, and he thought to try the same game with Harry. He did try it,

but the result was not what he expected. Harry tackled him splendidly, and threw him heavily, falling with him.

The ball fell from his arms, and Ned had it in a moment, flying back with it towards the Elizabeth goal.

He was stopped before he had gone many yards, and a scrimmage resulted.

The ball was out of the scrimmage almost immediately, and the play became open.

Fred Fiske, the center, was near the ball. He saw that to run with it would not result in much ground being gained, and that it would be wiser to kick it down the gridiron as far as possible.

His kick was a poor one, and worse still, it was taken by one of the Elizabeth players on the fly.

"Make your mark!" shouted half a dozen men, and the player who had caught the ball instantly planted his heel in the ground.

"Look out now!" cried "Half Back Harry." "He has a free kick."

"A free kick" means that the Pilgrims were bound to get at least ten yards away from the man who had the ball, and this, of course, they did. The kick was a success, the ball being stopped by Scott Wilson almost on the goal line.

It was not Scott's aim to play badly to-day, so he returned the ball by a splendid drop kick, and once more the play was in the middle of the gridiron.

Then, by some clever trick play and team work, Elizabeth forced the ball towards the Pilgrims' goal, and "Half Back Harry's" men were entirely on the defensive.

Harry himself was playing a fine game, but it was plain that his exertions had told on him. He looked paler than ever, and Scott Wilson was sure that he had seen him stagger once, as if he was on the point of collapsing.

Fred Fisk fumbled the ball, and instantly Elizabeth rushed it through.

Ned and Harry tried their best to check it, and Scott Wilson also did what he could, but all their efforts were useless, for Elizabeth crossed the line with the ball and gained a touch down.

Harry had been thrown heavily, three or four players falling on top of him, and he did not get up for some minutes after they had rolled off him.

"That's what you've done," said Scott Wilson to Jack Burke and Ned Rushton. "Look at Hunter. He's played out already. I told you how it would be. It's too bad altogether to throw away a game like this. You'd better have a substitute out for Hunter at once."

"Harry!"

"Well, Ned."

"Are you going to play any more?"

"That's why, I should think so. What if they do get a goal, boys, so can we, can't we? Play! well, that's the strategy I've never heard. Why, I'm only just getting warmed up."

And Harry sprang up, running quickly between the goal posts where the rest of the team were.

As the ball was kicked by the Elizabeth captain, the Pilgrims were on their feet, but they couldn't stop it, and the enemy scored their first goal.

The spectators were almost crazy, shouting themselves hoarse over the triumph of the local team.

When play was resumed half-time was called, and just at that moment, Mr. Hunter, with Grace Rushton and Katie Crane made their appearance, all three seeming to be greatly excited.

"What's happened here?" cried Mr. Hunter.

"Look, I've seen a great many 'hims'."

"You know what I mean. Harry, of course. What has become of him? Where is he?"

"Shure, an' it's not far ye have to look, Misther Hunter. There's the spalpeen himself over there."

"What playing?"

"Shure, that's what he calls it, an', begorra, he's not a bad judge."

"This will be his death," cried Mr. Hunter, frantically, turning to Grace and Katie. "He must be crazy!"

CHAPTER XI

HARRY'S GREAT RUNS—SCOTT AND DAVE REED AT WORK AGAIN

They ran out with the intention of compelling him to get out of the game, but just at this moment the referee's whistle blew. The players lined up for the second half.

The Elizabeth players were in great spirits. They had scored a goal, and felt, no doubt, that they would be able to score many others.

They knew that "Half Back Harry" was the mainstay of the Pilgrims, and they had seen what condition he was in.

The Pilgrims had the wind in their favor now, which was a great advantage as they soon found.

After the kick off they pressed Elizabeth hard, driving the opposing team into its own goal, and causing them to act on the defensive.

Jack Burke's play was especially good now. No one could pass him, and he carried the ball forward more than once, gaining many yards each time he did so.

"Half Back Harry" had been comparatively idle. The forwards had the ball to themselves most of the time, and he saw little of it, as, of course, he was back of the line.

All at once there was a tremendous shout. Fred Fiske and Jack Burke had forced the ball through, and had driven it over the line, making the Elizabeth team touch down in self-defense.

"Two points, anyway," said Ned Rushton. "That's a beginning."

"And one ending," growled Scott Wilson.

"What do you mean?" asked Ned, angrily.

"I shouldn't have thought you needed to ask such a question. Those fellows are only playing with us. They can do just what they please. Just watch them score."

The ball was brought out to the twenty-five yard line, and kicked off.

"Half Back Harry" caught the ball and instantly he started to run with it.

Scott Wilson shouted an angry exclamation.

"He ought to have kicked it back," he said. "He can't get far with it now."

But Harry was traveling at a surprising rate, fairly flying over the gridiron in fact, and he now had the entire field on his left as he tore down the ground not far from the side boundary line.

So fast was he running that the Elizabeth fellows tried in vain to overtake him.

Now he was within twenty yards of their goal line, and he had only the full back to pass.

The excitement was tremendous, the spectators cheering his great run just as heartily as if it had been made by one of their own side.

First Harry thought of changing the Elizabeth full back, but in his weak state he decided it was better not to attempt this. So he dodged him, passing under the man's arm, and rushing towards the goal line.

Pursuit was useless now. "Half Back Harry" crossed the line and touched down amidst great cheering.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Mr. Hunter, who with Grace and Katie was looking on at the game.

"And the doctor said he wasn't fit to go out," exclaimed Katie. "I shall never believe doctors again."

"Oh! I wish he wasn't playing," said Grace.

"Why?"

"It will do him so much harm."

Katie laughed.

"He's just made an eighty yard run. I don't think a boy who does that is going to die just yet."

Jack brought the ball out and "Half Back Harry" himself kicked it. To miss the goal from such a position was almost impossible, and in a moment the ball sailed right over the bar exactly in the middle of the space between the goal posts.

Five minutes later "Half Back Harry" got the ball again and another try resulted as he managed to cross the line. As before, the try was converted into a goal, and when the whistle blew almost directly after the Pilgrims were winners by 14 points to 6.

"Rather mistaken, don't you think?" said Ned Rushton to Scott Wilson. "Those fellows didn't do just as they pleased with us, did they?"

Scott made no answer. He rushed off to the dressing-room, being only too anxious to get off the grounds.

"Half Back Harry" had an ovation. The crowd cheering him till it was hoarse, and these shouts rendered Scott positively furious.

"Wonder whether you'll ever be the hero?" asked Dick Stagg, as he and Scott walked away.

"If you can't say anything pleasanter than that, I think you'd better hold your tongue. What a wonderful recovery that was of Hunter's. Most people thought he was half dead."

"I know. It was a trick."

"A trick!"

"Yes, he wanted to fool everybody, and he did it. Why, I'm told that his father, even, thought he was in a serious condition, and there was nothing much the matter with him after all."

"But he couldn't deceive the doctor."

"He didn't try. The doctor was in the plot with him. Scott, the laugh is on us this time, and no mistake."

Scott Wilson frowned but said nothing.

Dick was naturally of a talkative nature, and as he was unable to keep silent long, he commenced to chatter again.

"I've been thinking a good deal about you and 'Half Back Harry,'" he said.

"What of it?" was the sharp question.

"Why, I don't quite see the object of quarreling all the time. The best thing for you and Hunter to do is to make up and be friends."

"Are you crazy?"

"Not a bit. Absolutely sound in mind, Scott."

"Don't let me hear you talk like that again, or I shall think you're mad. Hunter and I can never be friends. Grace Rushton is the cause of our hating each other so, and I will win, Dick; you see if I don't. Come in and have supper. Dave Reed's coming round this evening and we'll have a chat."

Still Dave made his appearance.

He had a gloomy look on his face.

"Here's another man with a fit of the blues," cried Dick Stagg. "You and Scott have the most miserable looking faces I ever saw."

"Anything wrong, Dave?" asked Scott, noticing the mournful expression.

"Anything right, you should ask," growled Dave. "All our

prophecies have turned out badly, and my old rival, Tom Keene, is in clover."

"Is he talking much?"

"Talking? He owns the street, and the people think he's a wonder to turn out a team like the Pilgrims. Something must be done."

"Something shall be done, Dave. You have my word for that. The team is a strong one; there's no doubt on that point, and the only thing to be done is to smash the team up in some way. Think it over, Dave, and I'll do the same, and run round early in the week."

"Just a minute," said Dave Reed.

"Well?"

"Where's the next game?"

"Next game? Oh! on Wednesday at Seneca School, near Peekskill."

"A strong team?"

"Very, so I'm told. Well, good-by, Dave, keep your ears open, and hear all you can, and bring any news you get to me at once."

On Monday Dave Reed was at Scott Wilson's house again, and as usual, he found Dick Stagg with him.

Dave was in a very happy frame of mind, all smiles, and so Scott expected to hear good news.

"Guess what's happened?" said Dave.

"'Half Back Harry's' given up the captaincy," cried Dick.

"Out with your news, Dave," said Scott. "Don't keep us guessing."

"Well, Tom Keene and I are bosom friends now."

"What!"

Scott was so astounded he could scarcely speak.

"You and Tom Keene good friends," he added after a moment's thought. "Shall I tell you what that means?"

"Sure."

"Why, that you've been bought over. How much did you get for leaving me?"

CHAPTER XII

THE NEW PLOT—THE GAME WITH SENECA SCHOOL

"I'm not that kind of man!" exclaimed Dave, indignantly.

"I guess I have plenty of failings, but I stick to my friends."

"You can't be my friend and Tom Keene's at the same time," cried Scott, angrily.

"Ah, but I can pretend to be Tom Keene's friend," said Dave with a cunning look on his face.

"Pretend! Ah, now I begin to understand you. But what is your motive?"

"It's very easy to make that out. Tom Keene is the manager of the team and makes all arrangements. I wanted to find out all about the game at Seneca School."

"And what have you discovered?"

"The school is about five miles from Peekskill, and we can't get there by rail."

"Then we must hire a carriage."

"That's what Tom has done. He has written to a livery stable at Peekskill to have two carriages ready to take the fellows over."

"It seems to me this is a very unimportant matter, Dave. I don't quite see what you gain by knowing this."

"You don't?"

"I've told you so."

"Why, it's the last chance we've had."

"How?"

"An accident may happen to one of the carriages on the way to the school."

"An accident!" cried Scott, beginning to understand.

"Yes, and if it does, depend upon it, it won't happen to the vehicle you're in."

"Can this be done?" asked Scott Wilson.

"Why not?"

"How can we be sure that an accident will take place?"

"Because I will arrange everything. In this matter luck's on our side, Scott. It so happens that I know a man who works at the livery stable, and this man will do anything for me. He must, for I hold a club over his head. Now, I'm going right up to Peekskill to arrange matters."

"How is this accident to be managed?"

"I shall talk it over with my friend. My present idea is to fix things up so that one of the wheels may come off. I think that can be done."

"Good! I like the scheme very much, Dave; only you must be very careful not to be seen in the town. That would never do."

"I know my business. By jingo! if we have any luck at all we ought to be able to cripple half those fellows."

Dick Stagg jumped up suddenly.

"Dave, I don't like it. Great Scott! someone may be killed. No, no; it must not be done."

"Oh, oh!" said Dave, laughing scornfully. "So you have a virtuous fit, have you? That's funny."

"Don't have anything to do with it, Scott," said Dick. "It's too bad."

"You can't change my mind, Dick."

"I wash my hands of it."

"Wash your hands if you like, Dick Stagg," said Dave Reed, angrily, "but keep your mouth shut."

"I'm not a squealer. You can rely on my silence, though I wish you'd give it up. No good can come of it."

"No good to certain friends of ours," laughed Scott.

He was in great good humor over this scheme of Dave Reed's, thinking the result of it would be to clear away all his troubles, and he promised to reward Dave very liberally for his work.

On the following Wednesday the Pilgrims reached Peekskill.

"Half Back Harry" was, of course, with them, for he was in perfect health now. Quite a crowd of people was at the station, for Harry's name had been in all the papers, and everyone wanted to see the famous half back.

Led by Tom Keene, they walked through the town to the livery stable, where they found carriages in readiness.

"I had to have three—two were not enough," said Tom.

"And as it is, Tom, we shall be packed like sardines," laughed "Half Back Harry."

"So much the better," replied the old trainer. "It will keep you warm."

Scott was looking about anxiously for Dave Reed, knowing very well that he must be near at hand.

Presently he caught sight of him standing in the stable behind a buggy, and he sauntered over, with the intention of having a word with him.

There was no time to be lost.

"Is everything ready?" said Scott.

"Yes."

"In which coach must I ride?"

"The last."

"And which is the one for Hunter and his friends?"

"The first."

"Suppose he won't go in it?"

"I can't help that. You must attend to that part of the business; I've done mine."

Scott hurried away to where his carriage was standing. "In a minute!" he cried quickly. "We don't want to stay here all day."

"How shall we ride?"

"Let Hunter go in the first carriage. He's captain, and should be at the grounds first."

"Will he fall into the trap?" muttered Dick Stagg. Dick was half hoping he would not.

But Harry jumped in without a word, followed by Fred Fisk, Jack Burke and Ned Rushton, Bob Field getting on the box with the coachman.

"The whole crowd!" muttered Scott Wilson, looking at the carriage as it drove off. "If Dave has done his work well I get rid of the entire gang at one blow."

"By jingo," added Scott, after looking at the carriage a few minutes, "that wheel wobbles. Ah! it's all right. Come on, Dick. We'll get in the last carriage and take it easy."

Scott did not take much notice of Dick's talk, for he was staring ahead, trying to keep his eyes on the first carriage to see what happened. This was possible for a time, but as it was going much faster than the coach in which Scott found himself, it was soon lost to sight.

Strange to say, "Half Back Harry" and his friends arrived safely at Seneca School.

There they received a hearty welcome from the team they were about to play against, finding their opponents to be first-rate fellows and thorough sports.

Without loss of time they got into their football clothes, and going out on the gridiron had some practice with the ball.

The large crowd that had collected grew impatient, and shouted loudly for the game to begin.

"Why don't we start?" asked Ned Rushton. "Time's up."

"How can we? There are only seven of the regular eleven here."

"What can be keeping Scott Wilson?"

This was a puzzle that no one could solve.

"Faith, an' I know what I'd be afther doin' if I was captain."

"What's that, Jack?"

"I'd not be waitin' for the spalpeens. I'd start the game without thim."

"And how would you do that?"

"Why, shure, it's the substitutes we have. Let them play."

Now Harry was not desirous of acting in this manner, for he knew it would cause more bitter feeling between himself and Scott Wilson. On the other hand it was absolutely necessary that a start should be made.

The crowd was more clamorous than ever.

Up came the Seneca captain.

"If we don't start this game soon, Hunter, it will be dark before we're through."

"I'm waiting for some of my men."

"Can't you play your substitutes? It's either that or give up the idea of playing at all to-day."

"Very well. I'll begin."

Harry's men lined up without delay, the captain of the Pilgrims again having the misfortune to lose the toss for choice of goals.

But this was a matter of no importance, for to-day no wind was blowing.

The Seneca captain took the kick off, and he was about to kick the ball, when suddenly there was a great shout.

A farmer's wagon drove on to the ground, and in it Harry saw, to his astonishment, Scott Wilson, Dick Stagg, and two of their friends.

CHAPTER XIII

ARRIVAL OF SCOTT AND HIS FRIENDS—DICK STAGG'S SCHEME

"Hurrah! Here they are!" shouted most of the Pilgrims.

They were delighted to see Scott Wilson and his companions arrive, for they knew that the presence of four first-

tutes in the team weakened their chances against Seneca School.

"Hurry up!" cried Fred Fisk. "You've kept us waiting long enough already."

Though this was true enough, neither of the boys in the wagon seemed to stir, so most of the Pilgrims ran over to them.

Jack Burke laughed loudly when he saw them.

"Faith, it's a nice, respectable lot ye are, anyway! An' is it a prizefight ye've been afther havin', ye spalpeens?"

"Whatever have you been doing?" asked Fred Fisk.

And well might he ask the question.

The appearance of the four Pilgrims in the wagon was in favor of Jack Burke's theory. Most of them had cuts on their faces, and their clothes were torn and muddy.

"We met with an accident," said Scott Wilson, acting as spokesman, putting a good face on the matter. "Had a spill."

"Horses run away?"

"No, Fisk. The wheel came off, and over we went and had a bad shaking."

"Hurroo!" cried Jack Burke, below his breath. "It serves ye right."

"But I suppose you can play," said "Half Back Harry."

"You're not hurt so much as all that."

"I can play, but Dick Stagg's no good. He's got a bad knee-cap."

"Very well, be quick, Wilson. We're late now, and the Seneca fellows have been raising quite a racket about the game not being started."

Scott Wilson was soon joined by one of his companions in misfortune, and the ball was kicked off without any delay.

Scott caught Jack Burke laughing at him, and this made him mad.

"You'd better look after the game, Burke," he said, angrily. "You can see me whenever you please."

"Shure, that's true enough, but, begorra, it's not often ye have such a lovely look on ye."

Scott had a black eye and a cut running across his nose, so Jack's criticism was justified.

What would have happened between these two old enemies is no telling, but just then Jack's attention was more devoted to the ball, which he seized and ran with.

Quick as lightning he passed it to "Half Back Harry," and the latter dashed round towards the side boundary line.

He did not get very far. Harry's reputation had preceded him, and the Senecas paid him very particular attention, most of their forward watching very closely every movement he made.

"Down!" whistled the referee.

A scrimmage followed, and Fred Fisk caught the ball from the snapper back and rushed ahead with it. Fred was cut and thrown, too, before he had gone many yards.

When this kind of play had gone on for ten minutes, the Pilgrims realized that they had a powerful team to fight against, and half time came without either side having scored a point.

Dick Stagg was limping about the ground watching the game, and Scott Wilson came up to him during the interval. They mingled with the crowd that surrounded the players.

"He had the laugh on us this time and no mistake, Scott," said Dick, rubbing his injured knee.

"But 'Half Back Harry' doesn't know that he ought to have been in that carriage. Dave Reed has handled the affair pretty as usual. By jingo! I wish we could get even with him."

"Him? Dave Reed?"

"No, Hunter."

"Serves us right anyway, Scott," said Dick Stagg. "We ought not to have tried such a scheme."

"You make me tired," rejoined Scott, angrily. "A pretty kind of chum you are! Look here, Stagg, I'll have that money you owe me right away, and you and I will part company. I don't want a friend with a yellow streak in him. Pay me my money or I'll go straight to your uncle and ask him for it."

Furiously Scott turned on his heel, leaving Dick Stagg to reflect on the threat he had uttered.

Dick had a bad quarter of an hour thinking over it.

"Scott will do it, too," he reasoned. "He's riled—that's dead sure. I must make it up with him."

Dick had a quick brain, and he speedily saw, or thought he saw, a good chance of getting back into Scott Wilson's favor.

The play most of the time was a series of short runs, followed by scrimmages.

The excitement was intense, the Seneca boys rooting loudly for their side, and the few supporters the Pilgrims had present doing the same for them.

Gradually the crowd went forward on the gridiron, narrowing the space left for play as they did so, until only a small portion was left for the two teams.

The referee's appeals to the spectators to get back were not heeded. They would not stir, for they wanted to be close to the players in order that they might watch every movement.

From time to time, as a player made a rush with the ball, a stampede of the crowd would take place to give them room to run.

Dick was standing where the crowd was thickest.

Suddenly he felt a tug at his sleeve, and looking around, he saw Dave Reed at his elbow.

"I advise you to skip before Scott sees you," said Dick. "He's red hot against you."

"Piping mad, is he? Well, let him cool down. That carriage being last was a mistake which I couldn't help. Anyway, it's done with now, it's a poor game crying over spilt milk."

"You can square yourself with Scott, if you like."

"Of course, I'd like to. He's been a good friend to me, and I'll stand to him."

"See how close we are, Dave?"

Dave Reed nodded his head.

"Well, they'll be charging us presently."

"And we'll mighty quick get out of the way."

"Not when 'Half Back Harry' has the ball."

"Why not? Don't see any difference in him and any other player. I'll skip. I don't want to get hurt."

"This is the game, Dave. It's a scheme of mine and not a bad one, either. When 'Half Back Harry' rushes this way with the ball, the fellows in front of us will turn and run like greased lightning. Now we mustn't let them do it."

"Can we stop them?"

"You and I together can. That's why I was glad to see you, for I couldn't work the racket alone."

"So we stand our ground?"

"No, better than that. We wait till Harry Hunter makes a charge this way. Then we give the fellows in front of us a tremendous push. They'll fall on Harry. In a moment all will be confusion, and our captain will be buried by about twenty people with the breath cracked out of his body."

"It's worth trying, anyway, and I'm with you. Hello! here he comes! Now!"

As Dave spoke "Half Back Harry" made one of his terrific rushes, and the startled crowd began to back away.

Dick and Dave went to work at once.

Together they threw themselves forward, forcing the way

nearest to them on the front rank, which was trying to get out of Harry's way.

Two or three fell in the struggle, and Harry dashed right into the crowd.

A wild scene followed.

The people lost their heads, and began to hit out right and left with their fists, men tumbling in all directions, for a regular panic had set in.

"Get off my head!" shouted one man. "My leg's broken!" cried another, and then, gradually, the confusion ceased, and calm being restored, the spectators got on their feet again.

"He must be senseless!" exclaimed Dick Stagg, looking about him for the prostrate form of "Half Back Harry."

Then he heard a wild shout from the far end of the gridiron, and turning around, he was just in time to see "Half Back Harry" touch the ball down behind the Seneca goal.

"A try!" A try!" shouted the Pilgrims, excitedly, as they ran down the ground.

"What luck!" said Dick Stagg, bitterly. "Nothing hurts him."

CHAPTER XIV

"HALF BACK HARRY'S" GREAT RUN—SCOTT TALKS TO GRACE RUSHTON

"Half Back Harry" had struggled through the spectators and had made a great run, passing the Seneca players and reaching their goal with great ease.

He kicked the goal easily when Jack Burke had brought out the ball.

"If 'Half Back Harry' sees Dave Reed," was Dick Stagg's thought, "he'll get on to the fact that some mischief was intended. He must not set eyes on him."

Dick was walking away when he was pulled at his sleeve. "Stop that!" he cried, angrily, for he was in a very bad temper.

"Is he hurt?" asked a voice. He knew by the tone who it was.

"Dave Reed!" he exclaimed, in amazement.

Then he looked into a lane, for certainly the person in front of him was a Pilgrim.

Still Dave had been rolled in the mud and trampled on; his clothes had been torn, and his smart derby had lost its crown. Altogether he was a wretched spectacle.

"You'll do," said Dick Stagg, contemplating him gravely. "Yes, there's no doubt you'll do."

"Oh! I'll do, will I?" observed Dave Reed, sarcastically. "I'm just satisfied with me."

"You're a fool," said Dick Stagg, "but Harry Hunter might see you, and if he does it won't matter. Your own mother would be ashamed of you."

"But is he hurt?"

"No. He's just got a goal."

"I'll get out of this," said Dick Stagg, "but I'm not done yet, and Harry Hunter will find that out before long."

Dick had never heard Dave speak so bitterly, and he saw that "Half Back Harry" had another enemy nearly as merciless as Scott Wilson himself.

The game was well fairly on, and now that once Harry had made a great run, which had caused the spectators to rush forward, he no longer felt the same. He had tried hard to get the ball, but this they could not do. Harry's great run had caused the Pilgrims, and they were playing better than ever.

Jack Burke gained a try, but no goal resulted. Then "Half

Back Harry" ran in again and this time Ned Rushton sent the ball over the bar.

The game ended with the ball in the possession of the Pilgrims on the Seneca's five yard line, and "Half Back Harry's" team won by 17 to 0.

"I hope Dick Stagg and those other fellows were not much hurt by that carriage accident," said Harry, as he was leaving the gridiron in company with some of his friends.

"Don't wish that, Harry," cried Bob Field.

"Why not?"

"Because they only fell into the trap set for you. They intended you, Jack and Ned to be in the carriage that collapsed."

"I can't believe that, Bob."

"But I know it. While the game was on I heard Dick Stagg and Dave Reed talking it over."

"Oh, if Dave Reed is up here in Peekskill I can believe anything. Well," added Harry, laughingly, "I don't feel any the worse for all their plots, so let them go on if it amuses them."

Jack Burke walked up to Scott Wilson.

"It's a thoughtful chap ye are," he said, smilingly.

"Perhaps you'll explain."

"Faith, an that's aisy. Ye must have been afther hearin'. I didn't like ridin' in a three wheeled coach, so ye got in it yourself."

"So they know it," growled Scott, bitterly, as Jack walked away. "And I suppose Hunter and his gang are laughing at me. He'll tell Grace and Katie, I suppose. This must be ended," he added, savagely. "I can't live this kind of life much longer. One of us must quit, and it won't be me."

That same night Scott Wilson went to an evening party in New York, and there he met Grace Rushton.

She had come with her brother, and had brought Katie Clare, her bosom friend, with her.

Scott thought of an idea directly he saw her, and he waited his chance to carry it out. It was necessary that he should be able to talk to Grace alone.

The opportunity soon came.

Scott had spoken to Grace and had asked her to dance the first waltz with him, and she consented.

When the music began Scott proposed that they should sit out the dance, and the girl was delighted with this arrangement, preferring to talk to Scott in preference to dancing with him.

They easily found a quiet spot near the stair-case, a sort of alcove in which seats had been placed.

"I had something particular to say to you, Miss Rushton," began Scott, going to the point at once. "Can you guess what it's about?"

"What a question to ask me," laughed the girl. "Why, there are one thousand and one thoughts in my mind."

"Indeed," answered Scott, somewhat sneeringly. "I fancied your thoughts were always of the same thing."

Grace seemed uneasy.

"And what is that one thing?" she asked, forcing a laugh.

"You know," said Scott, fiercely, seizing the girl's wrist as he spoke. "Why ask? Have you seen him since the game?"

"Seen him! Who?"

"Pshaw! that wonder, 'Half Back Harry,' of course. I suppose he's been telling you a pretty story about me and my villainy."

"Harry never mentions your name."

"Treats me with contempt," growled Scott, savagely. "So he doesn't value his rival sufficiently to discuss him."

"Are you his rival?" asked Grace innocently.

"You know I am."

"In what way?"

"In every way. In football, with you——"

"Me!"

"That is no news to you," exclaimed Scott, passionately. "Hunter stands in my path everywhere."

"He has no bad feeling against you."

"What do I care for that. I hate him, and I tell you he will suffer."

Grace turned pale.

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Scott, quietly, "that's where I touched her, the blow told."

"Surely you would not do him an injury. They say," continued Grace, "that you have tried to do that already, but I thought better of you, and would not believe them. It's not true, is it?"

"Never mind the past. Hunter's kept a good skin up to the present time, but I won't promise it will be so much longer."

"But does danger threaten him?"

"Yes."

"Now I am warned, I can save him."

"You! Absurd. You can do nothing. Oh, yes, you can, though. Everything depends on you, Grace," cried Scott, changing his tone, "but not in the way that you think."

"Tell me now, Scott. You may be sure I will do anything for Harry, even if I suffer in doing it."

"You will do a great deal for him?"

"Everything! Quick—tell me what you want."

"A very small thing, and if you agree to it, not only will Harry be in no further danger, but I will be his friend."

"Tell me—tell me!" cried the girl, anxiously.

"The condition is," said Scott, slowly, "that you promise never to see or speak to Harry Hunter again."

The girl was thunderstruck. She had not expected such an ending as this.

When she recovered somewhat from her surprise, she sprang to her feet and looked with flashing eyes at Scott Wilson.

"Never!" she cried, firmly.

"You will not promise?"

"Promise! I would as soon be dead! I will still be Harry's friend, and he and I together will defy you!"

"Take care!" threatened Scott. "You don't quite know the kind of fellow I am. When I am down on a man I never let up on him, and if you leave me to-night without agreeing to my terms it will be a bad lookout for Hunter."

"You have my answer!" cried Grace. "Stand aside and let me pass!"

Scott gazed at her admiringly as she swept by into the ball room.

"She's pluckier than I thought," he muttered. "I believed I could scare her. Well, that plan's failed. Now to put my second scheme into operation."

Getting his coat, Scott hurried away from the house without mingling with the guests again.

CHAPTER XV

A FIGHT AGAINST KATIE CLARE—MR. RUSHTON'S CHARGE AGAINST HARRY

It was quite late, but Scott's brain was on fire and he knew he could not sleep.

Instead of going home he went to Dick's room. Dick lived with his uncle, who happened to be away from home, so Scott went the full without hesitation, although all the lights in the house were out.

Dick was naturally astounded to see him, but Scott cut short his expressions of surprise.

"Where can we talk quietly and secretly, I mean?" said Scott; "some place, mind, where no prying servant can hear a word we say."

"The servants are asleep long ago; come to my room."

Scott satisfied himself that there were no listeners near, then he shut the door closely.

"One would think we were a couple of conspirators," laughed Dick.

"And that wouldn't be a bad guess either. You don't suppose I came here to talk about the weather, do you?"

"Guess you came to tell me about the dance. Was Grace there?"

"Yes, and I tried to scare her. It was no good, Dick, I couldn't frighten her worth a cent."

"I could have told you that. Did she say anything about what happened when we were going to the game at Peekskill to-day?"

"Not a word, and don't you say anything, either. I'm tired of it."

"But Dave and I did our best."

"No doubt. Stop it! I won't hear another word. It's an old story, and I have something new to think about. That's why I'm here to-night."

"So you won't let up?"

"Never. Now keep quiet and listen. My scheme isn't quite complete, and you can put in an idea or two to fix it up. I intended to strike at Harry Hunter in a new way."

"Not on the football field?"

"No. He's too much for me there, and to you I don't mind admitting it. I'll get at him through a girl."

"Grace Rushton?"

"Wrong for once, Dick," laughed Scott.

"But there's no other girl in whom he takes any interest."

"How about Katie Clare?"

"That's absurd. If she likes any of our fellows, it's Jack Burke or Ned Rushton."

"I know that as well as you do, my dear Dick, and it doesn't make the slightest difference to my plans. In fact, it helps them."

"How?"

"You'll understand how when I've finished my story, Dick. To put it in a nutshell, Katie Clare has to disappear, and the blame for her doing so must fall on Harry Hunter."

Dick started aghast at Scott when he made this proposition.

"You seem scared," said Scott.

"Scared! Well, I should think so. Do you know, Scott, that what you propose doing is a criminal offense for which we could all get behind the bars."

"I know it well enough," answered Scott, coolly, "and it doesn't frighten me. I don't propose to be connected with the affair in any way."

"Then who is to be?"

"You."

"Come, come, Scott, that's a bit too much. I've done a good deal for you, and will again, but you can't ask such a thing as this of me."

"There's no risk, Dick. You don't suppose I want to get you into trouble. You'll only act as a go-between. The man to do the work must be Slick Dave. He won't refuse if he's paid well enough for the job."

"But I shall be in his power."

"Not at all. You must make your arrangements with him first. He then will be at hand for your interview, if the worst comes to pass. He won't touch you, and his word won't count for much with a police court."

"I don't know how much money I have," said Dick, smilingly. "Well, I'll do it."

"That's great," cried Scott, grasping his hand. "I'm not ungrateful, Dick, and I'll correct your debt to me. Now go ahead."

"But I don't quite understand how Katie Clare answers your purpose even yet."

"Well, she won't go to the riding-school, won't she, and she will shake Harry promptly."

"That's so. How is Slick Dave to carry off Katie?"

"Carry off! What bosh you're talking. There won't be any carrying off. The riding-school is going to be closed. Grace Rushton is going to the riding-school on Friday evening, and Ned will be at the theater with Jack Burke. A letter must be taken to Katie Clare saying that Grace has been thrown from her horse and is hurt, and asking Katie to come to her at once. Slick Dave, disguised, takes the letter in a cab. The rest is dead easy."

"I understand. She doesn't go to the riding-school at all, but to a house on my block, where she will be kept a prisoner."

"That's it exactly."

"But how is Hunter's name connected with it?"

"The letter taken to Katie must be signed by him."

"By Hunter? He's a good fellow, but, Scott, I don't like treating the poor girl so."

"She will be treated like a princess. Beyond being kept a prisoner, she won't have anything to fear."

"Well, I will see Dave Reed, and no doubt I can get him to consent."

"He must. He's in my power and knows it."

"Who will write the letter, Scott?"

"I will, and let you have it to-morrow. Good-night, old chap. Sleep well, and don't let our deep, dark schemes of villainy keep you awake. But not again."

Scott thought it was a good job, and the more he considered the matter the better he liked it.

"At one stroke, I shall get square with three people. Harry Hunter, whose identity I will keep. Jack Burke and Ned Rushton, both of whom I shall find out, will be angry at her disappearance. What fun! I wish Saturday was here."

The next morning, when the alarm was sounded, finding a good night's sleep, and a good breakfast.

It had been decided that the players should go up over night to the hotel, and the battle with them was likely to be a hard-fought struggle.

As soon as the players reached the hotel, they went to the hotel, and were soon fast asleep.

Next morning, when the alarm was sounded, they went down to the ground, and the game was on. The players were a little puzzled, and to get the winners out of their hands.

Everyone seemed on the best of terms. The discussions that took place were very friendly, and the harmony of the game was never disturbed. There were no quarrels of any kind.

"That's all right, boys. We are!"

"That's all right, boys. We are!"

"That's all right, boys. We are!"

"That's all right, boys. We are!"

"That's all right, boys. We are!"

"That's all right, boys. We are!"

Harry grasped it heartily, and the boys cheered with delight.

"Look, Ned!" cried Fred Fisk, calling to Ned Rushton, just as the latter was about to kick the ball.

"My father!" exclaimed Ned, in amazement, dropping the ball in surprise. "What can this mean? I can't understand, for I know he hasn't come here to see the game."

Mr. Rushton came across the ground like a gray horse, and thrusting the boys aside, who were in his way, he went right up to Harry Hunter and grasped him by the arm.

"You young villain!" he cried furiously, "Katie Clare has disappeared from my home. What have you done with her?"

CHAPTER XVI

"HALF BACK HARRY" ACCUSED—ANOTHER SURPRISE

"'Half Back Harry' a sounder!" cried several of the boys, amazed at hearing Mr. Rushton use such an expression in relation to their captain.

"Yes, that's what he is!" was the fierce answer, "and when you have heard what he has done you'll agree with me!"

Up to this time Harry had been silent. He was completely stunned by the fearful accusation that had been made against him.

But he was conscious of his innocence, and this gave him strength.

"If anything has happened to Katie Clare, Mr. Rushton, I am deeply sorry for it. I give you my word of honor that I have had nothing whatever to do with her disappearance."

"The facts are against you," said Mr. Rushton, coldly. "I have absolute proof."

So, many of the boys, thinking of this began to turn against Harry.

To the surprise of everybody, Scott Wilson spoke up for "Half Back Harry's" defense.

"It seems scarcely likely, Mr. Rushton, that Harry would take Katie Clare away from your home. You can hardly expect me to believe that."

"I have weighed my words well before I made the charge, Wilson. It is very good of you to speak up for your captain, but that doesn't alter matters. Here is my proof."

Mr. Rushton produced a letter.

"This was found in my house, evidently forgotten by Miss Clare when she left there."

"Does it name the person who took her away?"

"It is a letter written by Harry Hunter to Katie Clare, asking her to meet him. She left the house with the intention of doing so."

"I never wrote asking Katie to meet me," cried Harry, indignantly.

"Let me look at it, sir," exclaimed Scott Wilson, taking the letter.

He perused it attentively for a few moments.

"I have nothing to say now," said Scott. "It certainly is Hunter's writing."

"I declare I never wrote a line of it," cried "Half Back Harry," emphatically.

Mr. Rushton looked extremely angry.

"You had better make a clean breast of it," said Mr. Rushton. "Do not tell all you know, and I will have the police called. If you don't the matter will be placed in the hands of the police at once."

"Mr. Rushton, I am innocent."

"And that is all you have to say?"

"Yes."

"Very well. The law must take its course."

"We can't play to-day," cried one of the team.

"Why not?" asked Fred Fisk.

"Oh, well you know. After what's happened, I don't see how we can."

"You'd better choose a new captain," said Mr. Rushton, sarcastically, as he was walking away, "for I assure you, my lads, that your captain will not be on the gridiron to-day."

"Mr. Rushton! Mr. Rushton!" cried a girlish voice.

"Papa! Papa!" added another.

Everybody turned on the instant, and to their surprise they saw Grace Rushton and Katie Clare make their appearance.

"Where have you been, Katie?" asked Mr. Rushton, eagerly.

"I was locked up in a house in New York. I was treated very well there, but naturally I was very much frightened."

"Now, you are here, Katie," exclaimed Harry, going towards her, "you will do me justice. I am accused of having been mixed up in the affair. Say I am innocent."

"I can't say that," answered the girl, after a pause. "I received a letter from you which took me out of the house."

"I never wrote it."

"Besides," continued the girl, "the man who made me a prisoner told me you had employed him to do so."

"I swear I am innocent," cried Harry, aghast at what he had heard. "You believe me, don't you, Grace?"

The boy appealed to Grace Rushton, and she looked coldly at him for a moment or two, then she turned her back upon him.

"Let us get away, girls," said Mr. Rushton. "The Albany team are coming on the gridiron, and we don't want anybody to hear us. As for you, Hunter, I shall do nothing. You deserve to be severely punished, but I don't want Miss Clare's name dragged into the newspapers. Come, girls."

And without taking the slightest notice of Harry, Grace and Katie left with Mr. Rushton.

For some moments no one spoke. They were too busy thinking over all that had happened.

The Albany captain was crossing towards the Pilgrims.

"Who's to be captain?" cried Scott Wilson, quickly.

"I am."

"You can't captain me, Hunter," was the instant reply.

"Not me! not me!" came at once from other boys.

"Come with me step this way," cried Harry, without a moment's hesitation.

Six of the team stood by him.

"Then to you, Wilson," he said. "What have you to say to that?"

"That I won't play."

"Then we must get on without you. We have enough players here to take the places of any who fall out of the eleven."

Harry tossed with the Albany captain for choice of goal, and losing the toss the Pilgrims had to play against the wind.

"Where are those fellows going?" asked the Albany captain, as Scott Wilson, Dick Stagg and two other players left the gridiron.

"They won't play. We've had a bit of a row and that's the result. However, we have enough substitutes here to make a full team."

The Albany captain went off and told his comrades what had happened.

CHAPTER XVII

A HANDSOME CAPTAIN—"HALF BACK HARRY'S" FINE RUN

"Half Back Harry" had a lot to say about the game, and he was particularly the Albany Eleven carried off the field and the result of the game.

A beautiful double pass enabled them to do this, and the Pilgrims realized at once, from this specimen of their opponent's play, that they had a powerful team to fight against.

Scott rubbed his hands gleefully.

"What did I tell you?"

Dick Stagg laughed.

"Why, the game won't be worth looking at, it's too one-sided. I have a great mind to go."

"No, stay, Dick. We must have the laugh at Hunter and his friends. Ha! ha! this day settles his career on the gridiron. Everything has turned out well for us to-day."

"Do you think that it was a good thing for us to release Katie Clare so soon?"

"The very best thing possible. If she had been detained any longer the police would have been hot on her track. It was a very wise move on Slick Dave's part, and I shan't forget to tell him so."

"Jack Burke's down. By jingo! they're crowding round. He must be badly hurt."

"Hope he's killed?" exclaimed Scott, savagely. "Now, I've done up Hunter I'll finish Burke, for I hate him nearly as much."

"He's a good player, Scott, and as he will get out of the games, Hunter's lot will be weaker than ever."

"Hurroo! I'm all right!"

The shout bore good testimony to the soundness of the lungs of the player who uttered it. All over the field it was heard, and at the same instant Jack Burke surprised his friends by springing to his feet and announcing his readiness to go on with the game.

Jack soon showed he was one of the flyers of the gridiron, for getting possession of the ball, he made a fifty yard run with it before he was tackled.

The struggle was a fierce one.

The spectators were shouting all the time, so great was the interest they felt in the game. The first half was nearly over, and not a point had been scored. The ball most of the time was in the center of the field, and neither side was able to gain much ground. At this point the Albany captain took the ball from a pass, and eluding most of the Pilgrims, he dashed with it towards their goal.

It was now Harry's turn to prove that he was a flyer, too.

That the Albany captain could be overtaken seemed out of the question, yet "Half Back Harry" made the attempt.

He dashed across the gridiron after the rival captain, straining every nerve to reach him, whilst the other was running at his utmost speed.

The spectators went fairly wild now, as step by step "Half Back Harry" overhauled the leader.

"Hurrah!"

A terrific shout went up as "Half Back Harry," with a desperate spring leaped forward, landed on the Albany captain's shoulders and brought him heavily to the ground.

"Saved!" said Ned Rushton, as the referee's whistle sounded down.

"Yes, but for how long, Ned?" asked Fred Fisk. "The scrimmage is within five yards of the line. They are sure to rush the ball over."

"Play up, fellows!" cried Harry. "It's almost half time. Work your hardest."

This encouraged the Pilgrims, and they resolved to do their very best.

The quarter back sent the ball back. Albany tried a double pass. Like lightning Fred Fisk was on the man who first had the ball, and Jack Burke tackled the player to whom it was passed.

Ned Rushton and three other players were supporting Jack,

with the consequence that the ball was sent back several yards before the referee whistled down.

In the next scrimmage Albany did better, keeping the ball and carrying it forward at least six yards, so that it was almost over the line.

The referee's whistle blew.

"Half time!" shouted the Pilgrims gleefully.

By jingo, Harry!" said Ned Rushton, "I never was more pleased in my life to hear those words."

"You played a great game, boys," said "Half Back Harry."

"Do the same in the next half, and the game is ours for sure."

The game had recommenced by this time, and curiosity was excited to the utmost to see what the Pilgrims could do, now they were playing with the wind behind them.

To begin with luck went against the Pilgrims.

Albany kicked off, and of course the Pilgrims had the ball.

Unfortunately, Fred Fisk punted it, and Albany, making a dash at him, captured it again.

Harry looked grave, for he knew it was no easy matter to take the ball from such players as Albany. However, he and his friends played their hardest, and eventually "Half Back Harry" himself got the ball when Albany was within twenty yards of the Pilgrims' goal.

He flew forward like an arrow with it, rushing down the gridiron with all the Albany men after him.

They never caught him, for at each step he took he increased his lead, so that as he neared the Albany goal he was able to take matters easy, and when he crossed the line the nearest player was twenty yards away.

It was the greatest run of the season, not less than ninety yards, and when the try was followed by a kick which sent the ball flying over the bar, the crowd shouted itself hoarse.

Two other goals followed, and the game ended by a score of 18 to 0 in favor of the Pilgrims.

"A great day, Harry," said Ned Rushton, as they were leaving the gridiron.

"For everybody but me."

"Everybody but you?"

"Yes. There's a blot upon my honor, Ned, that can't be wiped away by winning a football game."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Harry was further mortified when the news was brought to him that Scott Wilson was on the best of terms with Mr. Rushton and Mr. Hunter. Whatever Grace was there seemed to be.

Ned, Jack and Harry were living together now.

Mr. Rushton had quarreled with Ned because he refused to marry a Harry, and Mr. Hunter, Harry's father, had turned him out of doors for what he considered as disgraceful conduct with regard to Kate Clare.

Scott Wilson and Dick Stagg were on top now with a vengeance.

"Our team will be broken up," said Ned Rushton, a few days after the game at Albany.

"Why?"

"I haven't heard the news, Harry?"

"Well, I suppose, for that's all that comes to me now." "The fact is that Scott Wilson is organizing another team. He has got to get his fellows to leave us and join him."

"What's the reason?"

"Can't say. He promises great things, for he has lots of money, you know."

"A commodity we're rather short of," said Harry, "since you and I quarreled with our respective fathers. How many of our men are we sure of?"

"You, I and Jack Burke are three to start with. Then there's Fred Fisk. He's solid."

"An' falth, I can answer for four of my friends," cried Jack Burke. "That's eight, anyway."

"Eight!" exclaimed Harry. "Then we have nothing to fear. I can get three or four other fellows I know."

"Hurroo! Begorra, we'll play betther than ever. We will show Misther Wilson he's not the only pebble on the beach."

"Harry!"

"Well, Ned."

"We have no game fixed for Saturday."

"I know that. What of it?"

"An idea occurred to me."

"On wid it, Ned, me lad. Shure, an' I hope it's a good one."

"It's great. What do you say to our playing Scott Wilson's lot?"

"I'm not afraid the least bit in the world, only it's just a question whether we shall be in shape to meet them so soon as Saturday. A week later I should feel more confident about the result."

"We'll bate them. It's aisy."

A ring came at the bell, and Jack, going to the door, received a letter from a messenger boy.

"Bedad, an' I know that ugly writing," he muttered.

"Hello!" he cried, tearing open the envelope, and reading the contents of the letter it contained. "Here's a challenge, boys."

"Who from?"

"Scott Wilson."

"Read it! Read it!" cried Ned, excitedly.

The letter was as follows:

"If you are not afraid to play my team, I shall be glad to have a game with you on Saturday next, at Prespect Park, at three o'clock. Bearer waits answer."

"SCOTT WILSON."

"Afraid!" cried Harry, springing from his chair, and rushing to the writing desk. "He shall soon see if I'm afraid."

"Shure, it's glad I am he used that word," whispered Jack to Ned. "We shall play now."

Harry scribbled off a few lines to say that he would be on the ground with his team at the time and place named, and gave the note to the bearer to carry to Scott Wilson.

Fred Fisk called and they told him the news.

He was delighted, for amongst Scott's friends were a few fellows Fred hated, and he wanted a chance of getting even with them.

"But we shall be beaten all the same," said Harry. "I had to accept the challenge, for I wouldn't let him call me coward, but the result will be against us."

"An' I'm not wid ye, lads," said Jack Burke.

"Guess who's left us," exclaimed Fred Fisk suddenly.

"No one in particular," answered Ned Rushton, "since we four are here."

"Does it surprise you to hear that Bob Field has joined Scott Wilson?"

"What! Our mascot?"

"Yes, our mascot."

"I wouldn't have believed that of him. Does he give any reason? You know he hated Wilson."

"Yes, I met him, Ned, and he told me he couldn't play with a fellow who'd treated Kate Clare the way Harry did."

The news that the Pilgrims had split into two teams drew an enormous crowd to Prospect Park to see them play against each other.

Grace Rushton and Katie were both there, but neither Harry nor Ned went near them. Scott Wilson was talking to them most of the time, and seemed to be on the very best terms.

"Half Back Harry" walked towards Bob Field, of whom he had always been very fond, and was cut to the heart when the little fellow deliberately turned his back on him, and walked away towards Dick Stagg.

Jack went up to Harry at this point, and spoke to him, watching him closely as he did so.

"It's enjoyin' himself, is Mr. Wilson, I'm thinkin'," said Jack Burke, directing Harry's attention to a group composed of Scott and the two girls.

Harry's eyes flashed fire and he compressed his lips as he looked.

"The tonic works," muttered Jack. "It's a great game he'll be playin'."

"I will win this game to-day," said "Half Back Harry," in a most determined tone, "or never put foot on the gridiron again!"

CHAPTER XIX.

A FIERCE STRUGGLE ON THE GRIDIRON—TWO BAD ACCIDENTS.

"Say, you haven't given your team a name!" cried Fred Fisk. "What do you call yourselves?"

"Pilgrims!" answered Dick Stagg.

"Faith, an' it's our name ye're after takin'," said Jack Burke.

"We have as much right to it as you," retorted Dick Stagg. "Haven't we, Scott?"

"Certainly; we belonged to the original team, and many of its members are on our side now."

"You're talking nonsense, Wilson," said Ned Rushton, "if you'll excuse me for telling you so."

"Oh, don't let's have any fuss about it," cried Dick Stagg. "The sooner we get on with the game the better."

He went up to Scott Wilson and whispered in his ear.

"That's a good idea of yours, Dick," cried the latter: "I'm quite willing to play on those terms."

"What terms?"

"Why, Rushton, that the winners of the game to-day shall be entitled to call themselves 'the Pilgrims' in future."

"That's a deal!" shouted Half Back Harry, instantly.

There was a great crowd around the ground. Scott Wilson was largely the cause of such an attendance. He had caused it to be known everywhere that he had collected a team which would easily beat what remained of the original Pilgrims.

"Half Back Harry" had lost the toss for choice of goals. Luckily Jack seemed to be against him.

Scott went over to have a hard word with Grace Rushton, who was standing just outside the boundary line.

Coming away from the girl, he spoke to Dave Reed, who was acting as trainer for his team.

"We have them safe, Dave," he said easily.

"Not a chance of it. Today ends 'Half Back Harry's' football career."

Harry now kicked off.

"Half Back Harry's" men had not played together before, and therefore their team work was weak. Still, they worked with a will, and half Wilson's lot down to their end of the ground.

They gave time Dick Stagg and Scott Wilson much trouble.

perate rushes with the ball, and each time Jack Burke, Ned Rushton or "Half Back Harry" tackled them. In three downs they did not advance five yards, so they lost the ball.

The weakness of "Half Back Harry's" side could be well seen now. The men were not familiar with the signals, and when the snapper back sent the ball out from the scrimmage, it was of little advantage to Harry's eleven.

Half time was called, and not a man on the ground but was glad of a rest.

"Held our own up to now," said Ned Rushton, "and that's something!"

"We may win yet," remarked Fred Fisk. "If Harry would only brace up we might anyway. What's the matter with him?"

"Shure, an' ye'll do, Mither Fisk, if ye play as well as he does. Ye're after forgettin' it's not much better than a scrub eleven we are."

"Jack's right. Taking everything into consideration," said Ned, "I think Harry's making a great fight."

The change of goals did not benefit "Half Back Harry's" eleven, for the wind had fallen. However, his team more than held its own, and Scott Wilson watched very anxiously to see whether Dick Stagg was going to put his plan into operation.

Suddenly Ned Rushton got the ball and dashed forward with it.

He was tackled immediately, held and thrown to the ground, the men piling up heavily as he fell.

Everybody got up except Ned.

"Guess I'm done this time," said the boy, as he lay on his back, apparently quite helpless. "Seems as if my leg were broken."

However, it was not as bad as this. Still, the injury was quite enough to send Ned out of the game, and Scott Wilson gave Dick Stagg a grateful look when he saw what had happened.

"It was cleverly done," muttered Scott, "and the referee saw nothing."

A moment or two later there was a shout from Fred Fisk, and down he went as if he were shot.

The game was instantly suspended, and the players crowded around him to see what was the matter.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GOAL FROM THE FIELD—SCOTT WANTS HIS REVENGE.

"You did that purposely!" cried one of "Half Back Harry's" team to Dick Stagg.

"I'll do something to you," answered the latter, viciously. "I saw you kick him on the ankle deliberately."

All the boys were talking at once, and in the midst of the confusion Fred Fisk was carried off the field, for he could not walk.

The second half of the game was nearly through, and "Half Back Harry's" side, weakened though it was, had held its own.

"They're playing a great game, that's all there is to it," said Dick Stagg. "Never mind, Scott, things might be worse; we might be beaten, you know."

Several times Harry had run with the ball, but he did not make much progress with it. His opponents knew he was their most dangerous player, so they watched every movement he made, and by half time he was collared before he could get away.

However, he was at least kept in the game, and seemed to get things back into Harry's hands.

Harry then made a sensational play. He succeeded in kicking goal from that point. The game was won.

But the game was no more than finished before they received another challenge from the team they had just beaten. They took a vote on it, and the boys decided unanimously to play them on the next Saturday.

"Well, boys," he said, laughingly, "you have decided that next Saturday's to be our funeral. Don't forget one thing."

"Have we done so?"

"Yes, Ned. You have forgotten that our last game we played a lot of men we had never seen before. This won't happen again, for I intend to have you all on the gridiron every day this week, and put in some good practice."

"I haven't forgotten that," said Fred Fisk, and as he walked away with Jack and Ned he remarked: "Harry's trying to keep up our spirits, but it isn't much good. We've had our day, and Wilson's is coming."

Round at Scott Wilson's were Dick Stagg and Dave Reed.

Slick Dave had heard that there was to be another game on Saturday, and he called to get all the information he could.

"And so you don't want me this time," said Slick Dave, pulling a long face.

"Not this time," laughed Scott. "Your peculiar kind of work, Dave, is no in demand just now."

Dave Reed looked as if he did not understand.

"Scott means," explained Dick Stagg, "that we don't want any crooked work."

This statement puzzled Dave more than ever.

"No crooked work!" he cried. "Then how in thunder are you going to win?"

Scott explained that he had secured King and Hare, the two Princeton half backs, and also Spencer, the Yale center, so as to put the result of the game beyond doubt.

"And so, Mister Reed," said Scott Wilson, coldly, "you and I are through with each other. I've no further use for you. Show Dave the door, Dick. Good-day, Dave."

In less time than it takes to say it, Dave Reed found himself in the street wearing a face that was a complete picture of disgust.

"So he shows me the door, does he?" muttered Dave. "He's no further use for me." A dark look showed itself. "Take care, Scott Wilson, take care or you'll be sorry. I'm not the sort of fellow you can pick up one day and drop the next. You bet your life I'm not."

Turning with a savage expression on his face he shook his fist viciously at Scott Wilson's house.

Just at this moment Bob Field, the former mascot of the Pilgrims, came up. With surprise he had witnessed Dave Reed's proceedings, but as he was a shrewd little fellow he had some idea what had happened.

"Hello, Dave!" he cried. "You don't mean to say that you and my friend Scott have quarreled?"

"He's no good," answered Dave, sullenly. "You'd better be stuck to your old friend 'Half Back Harry.'"

"It's too late to think of that now, Dave," said Bob, with a grin. "Harry wouldn't speak to me if I went up to him."

"He's a better sort now than Scott Wilson; yes, by jingo, he is."

Whenever Dave Reed mentioned Scott Wilson's name his eyes glistened with rage.

"Oh, I don't know. Scott has many good points in him," said Bob Field, airily. "One thing about him is he sticks to his friends."

But Dave was trying to catch Dave Reed's animosity against Scott Wilson, and he knew that by praising him he could do no harm.

The plan succeeded. Dave fairly boiled over with passion now.

"Stick to his friends!" he cried, furiously. "Is that what you say?"

"Yes."

"How has he stuck to me, I want to know?" asked Dave. "Thrown me off like an old shoe. Never mind, I'll be square with him yet, see if I'm not."

"You can't get square with Scott Wilson," said Bob Field. "He has lots of money and you have none, so, Dave, the game isn't equal."

"Are you going anywhere now?" asked Dave Reed, hoarsely, clutching Bob's arm as he spoke.

"Nowhere particular. I was going to call on Scott, but that can wait. Why do you ask?"

"Because I'd like to have a chat with you, if you don't mind. You're an intelligent youngster, and if you'll come round to my room we can say things to each other that may be dangerous in the street."

Bob Field lost no time in accepting this invitation.

His eyes sparkled with delight and he looked happier than he had done for many a day.

Dave Reed spoke quite freely now.

"You recollect that affair in which 'Half Back Harry' got such a bad name?" he said.

"You mean the carrying off of Katie Clare?"

"Yes."

"How could I forget it? It was that which led to the breaking up of the football eleven, and made me leave Harry Hunter and stick to Scott Wilson. Well, what of it?"

"Harry was blamed wrongly."

"I've often thought that," answered Bob Field.

"I know it. See here, do you think Harry Hunter has a revengeful nature?"

"I should say not."

"Then you think that he might forgive a man who had done him a great injury?"

"Depends on the man. If he were only a tool in the hands of others he would certainly do so."

"Then, by gosh! I'll make a clean breast of it, and take my chance. I'd rather run the risk of being put behind the bars than not get square with Scott Wilson."

"You! Are you talking about yourself?" inquired Bob Field, pretending to be surprised. "I don't understand you."

"Yes, I'm talking about myself," replied Dave Reed. "I know all about it. Scott Wilson engineered the job and I carried it out. Wilson forged the letter and contrived that all the blame should fall on Harry."

"This is great news. Hurrah!" shouted Bob Field, rising up and dancing about the room. "Hurrah! 'Half Back Harry' cleared at last!"

"You seem delighted."

"So I am."

"But why should you be? You're not a friend of Harry Hunter's now. You are one of Scott Wilson's lot."

"He thinks I am," laughed Bob. "I've been deceiving all of you. I never believed Harry guilty. He's the best fellow in the world, and I only pretended to be Scott Wilson's friend in order that I might worm myself into his secrets and expose him."

"Great Scott! You have a smart head on your shoulders, youngster, and no mistake. You've taken in the whole crowd."

"So much the better. But come along."

"Where?"

"To the notary's. You must put that statement of yours in writing. Unless, of course, you want to stand out of it."

"I don't eat my words," said Dave Reed, fiercely. "Put my story in writing as soon as you please and I'll set my hand to it."

(Continued on page 25)

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(Continued from page 24)

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

A great crowd was present around the gridirons when the time had come to play the final game between the two teams.

Everybody who has figured in this story was there.

Mr. Hunter had come to see the game, although he and "Half Back Harry" were not on speaking terms.

Mr. Rushton, Ned's father, was there, with Grace and Katie, and near them stood Dave Reed and Tom Keene, "Half Back Harry's" trainer.

Not a word or a sign of recognition passed between "Half Back Harry" and the girls. The boy felt it bitterly, but he was too proud to let his face show his feelings.

"Can't make them better," said Tom Keene. "They're fit to make the fight of their lives."

The Pilgrims kicked off the ball amidst a great shout from the crowd.

Scott Wilson's men had the ball, and a number of scrimmages took place.

The crowd was surprised to see how little progress was made after each down. King and Hare, the famous half backs, took the ball from the snapper back more than once, and tried to run with it. But the Pilgrims had eyes like hawks on these two men, and they were collared and thrown before they could get away.

Certainly, this was an unexpected state of things.

Occasionally some fine tackling by Harry or one of his friends would call forth a shout of applause, but most of the crowd were too intent on the game to say anything.

Half time was called, and neither side had gained a point.

True, the Pilgrims had been penned in their goal most of the time, and so the advantage lay with their opponents.

"Wilson!" said Spencer, the Yale center.

"What?"

"You deceived me."

"How?"

"Told me I'd have to play against a lot of boys. Great Scott! It's about the hardest game I was ever in."

"Oh, they're about done for—played out, in fact, and you'll simply walk over them when the game starts again."

There was a tremendous shout. Spencer, the center, had expected the Pilgrims to win, and was disappointed. He was so fast on his feet, it was not likely he could be overhauled.

But "Half Back Harry" was waiting him, and he was not a tiger. He threw him to the ground.

For the first time Scott Wilson showed signs of temper.

He bit his lips with vexation when he saw what had happened. Still, he had, even now, no fears as to the result.

Fred Fisk had all the breath knocked out of his body at this point, and the game was suspended to allow him to rest.

Scott Wilson was standing near Bob Field and Katie Clare, and quite near enough to hear what they were saying, and as the first few words that came to his ears excited his attention.

"Have you heard the news, Katie?" said Bob Field.

"What's the news?" said Katie.

"That's all the news. How do I know what you want?"

"I want to know what you think of the game."

"I think it was a very close game, and that the Pilgrims were very well played."

"I think you were very well played, too, and that you were very well played."

"Well, Katie, my news is that Dave Reed has made a clean confession before a notary, stating that 'Half Back Harry' had nothing to do with the business, that Dave Reed himself was only a tool, and that he was employed and paid by Scott Wilson."

Scott Wilson waited to hear no more. He staggered, rather than walked away, and seemed dazed as he went into the game.

"Katie, Scott Wilson heard every word. I've given him something to think about. Now go and tell Grace all if you like."

Katie bounded away, for she was only too anxious to enlighten her friend.

The Pilgrims had the ball. "Half Back Harry" secured it when it was thrown out of the scrimmage, and with a wild rush toward the side line he managed to escape Scott Wilson's forwards.

Then down the gridiron he went.

Scott made a feeble effort to collar him, but failed badly, and "Half Back Harry," after a run of about eighty yards, carried the ball over the goal line.

After this Dick took scarcely more interest in the game than Scott had done. The consequence was that the Pilgrims carried all before them.

"Half Back Harry" got four tries, Jack Burke one and Ned Rushton two. Altogether five goals were kicked, and the victory of the Pilgrims was complete.

Instead of the crowd getting around Harry and his eleven to cheer them and congratulate them on their great victory, the people made a wild rush for Scott Wilson. The latter, half mad with fright, then showed that as a runner he was second to none on the field. Across the parade ground he went, with a thousand people at his heels, gaining on his pursuers at every stride, until finally he managed to lose them near Flatbush avenue.

All this was Bob Field's doing, for he had circulated the story of Scott Wilson's rascality toward "Half Back Harry."

The first two to beg the champion's forgiveness were his father and Mr. Rushton. Then Grace made her peace with him, and as the boy was greatly attached to her she had an easy task in doing so.

Harry thanked Jack Burke, Ned Rushton and Fred Fisk, the three staunch friends who had stuck to him through everything.

"And I thank you, too, Bob," he said, warmly, "though at one time I thought you had turned against me."

"But I didn't," laughed Bob. "Now, what's to be done about Scott Wilson?"

"He ought to be punished," cried one boy.

"No, no," said Grace. "Let him alone. He will never show his face in these parts again. Let us forget all about Scott Wilson and his wrong-doing, and only remember the deeds of the Pilgrims and their captain, 'Half Back Harry.'"

Read "THE BOY RAILROAD KING; OR, FIGHTING FOR A FORTUNE," by James C. Merritt, which will be the next number (652) of "Pluck and Luck."

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Pluck and Luck

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 23, 1910.

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BRIEF, BUT POINTED.

Plaster of Paris is so called from having been obtained in the beginning from Montmartre, near Paris, France.

In forty years the price of wall paper has decreased 100 per cent., owing to the cheapened process of manufacture.

Moonshine has been found to have a marked effect on stammering. People so afflicted stammer most at the full of the moon.

Tea first became a general beverage among the wealthy in England in the year 1657. At that time it cost about £10 a pound.

The authorities in Glasgow are introducing the system of police dogs to aid the constabulary in suburban districts where burglaries are most common.

If you have ever traveled in Holland you may have noticed that some of the older canal boat men still measure the distances they travel by the number of pipes they have smoked by the way. Just as the hillmen of Assam are accustomed to calculate the ground they have covered along an unfamiliar road by the number of quids of tobacco they have got through. The Burmese equivalent for our "mile" is a word that means "to sit" and is used to indicate the distance a man can ordinarily go without sitting down to rest.

There are various fabulous and contradictory legends of Saint George and the Dragon, but the generally accepted story is as follows: He was born in Cappadocia in the third century. Setting out in search of adventures, he reached the city—sometimes given as Selene in Libya, sometimes as Berytus in Syria—to find it greatly annoyed by a dragon, which, unless it had a virgin to devour every day, emitted a pestiferous and death-dealing stench. The lot had fallen to the king's daughter—Cleodolinda and Sabra are her more usual names—to be made a meal of, and Saint George met her on the way to her doom. Learning the story, he at once gave battle to the dragon, and with the aid of his good sword, Avelon, he soon pinned it to the ground. He bound the monster with the girdle of the princess and led it into the town, calling on the terrified multitude not to fear, but be baptized in the faith, and the dragon would be slain. Twenty thousand were baptized, and the saint drew his sword and slew the dragon. Saint George was made the patron saint of England in 1192, when Richard I. departed for the Crusades.

According to official statistics, the total population of the Russian Empire on January 14, 1910, was 150,055,200. Russia is twenty times less densely populated than England, thirty-four times less than Belgium, sixteen times less than Germany and ten times less than France. Barely 13.5 per cent. of Russia's population is to be found in the towns; in this respect she comes last on the list of European countries. City populations are greatest in the kingdom of Poland, Finland, Central Siberia and the Caucasus. Russians form from 50 per cent. to 80 per cent of the population in Siberia, 8.9 per cent. in Central Asia, 6.7 per cent. in Poland, 2 per cent. in Finland, 2 per cent. in Turkestan and 4 per cent. in the Caucasus. Of other races, Tartars form 10 per cent. There are six millions of Jews in the empire. Classified according to creed, the population falls under the following categories: Mahometans, 10.80 per cent.; Roman Catholics, 8 per cent.; Protestants, 4 per cent.; Israelites, 4 per cent, and Orthodox, 73.20 per cent.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

Penley (stuck for a word)—"Let's see! What is that you call a man who marries more than one wife?" Grump—"An idiot, I call him."

"It wasn't much trouble to wind up poor old Sneezem's affairs when he died." "No?" "All the property he left behind was a silver watch."

Picture Dealer—Sorry, but I buy pictures of no one except those whose names are well known. Artist—Well, my name's quite well known. It's Smith.

"My next number will be the wedding march," said the man with the violin. "And do you wish me to accompany you, professor?" asked the girl at the piano.

The other day Chicago employed its 300,000 school children to clean the streets, and we presume after they got through about 200,000 mothers were busy cleaning school children.

"Mrs. Chauffeurly is always running down people when I go out with her in her auto." "Doesn't she ever get arrested?" "No, they can't arrest you for gossiping, can they?"

"I've got a new boy at my house," said the barber proudly, as he began operation on the face before him. "That's my fourth." "All little shavers, eh?" said the lathered customer.

"It's really distressing to think," said the wealthy Mr. Pecksniff, "that many very common and ignorant people will be admitted to heaven." "Well," replied Mr. Cutting, "that needn't worry you."

Insurance Agent—Possibly, madam, you might like to insure your husband's life. Mrs. Grogan—Insure me husband's life, is it? Faith, a big fool I'd be to insure his life. He's no good on earth at all, at all! His life ain't worth a sixpence to me!

A certain well-known politician, it has been told, was out hunting and lost his way. Night came on before he found a habitation. Finally he came to a fisherman's hut, and banged on the door. "Who's there?" came a sleepy voice. "Crover Cleveland." "Well, what do you want?" "I want to stay here all night," was the response. "All right, stay there."

ACROSS THE STEPPES

By Horace Appleton.

"Mines of Siberia for life!"

Such was the sentence of the judges which had tried Sergius Feodoror, despite his appeal for justice, the sentence of the judges was pronounced upon him, and he was led away to prison.

A look of deep hate, mingled with triumph, appeared on the face of one of the judges for an instant only and then faded, but it had been seen by Boris Feodoror, the son of the condemned man, a boy of sixteen years.

"My father is innocent," he murmured; "he had no knowledge of these plots; the blood of Count Wassiloff is not upon his hands."

The crime of which Feodoror had been declared guilty was the murder of a man high in Russian political and social circles, who had incurred the hatred of the Nihilists by his firm adherence to the interests of his sovereign.

Coupled with the charge of murder was that of being in league against the government, which was apparently proved by documents claimed to have been found in his house, but of which the unhappy man emphatically denied all knowledge.

The son of the condemned man had succeeded in gaining entrance to the place where the trial was held, though not without great difficulty, and watched the proceedings with extreme closeness, letting no word or look escape him.

"My father is innocent," he repeated, as he made his way out. "That look upon the face of the Count Petrovitch means something, if I only knew what. He is my father's enemy, I am certain, for no just judge gloats over the fate of a sentenced prisoner."

Leaving the court, the boy made his way to a street in a respectable although not fashionable quarter of the city, where he was met by his mother, a benevolent-looking woman of middle age.

"You come alone, Boris?" she said, her voice trembling. "Your father——"

"They have condemned him to a life of exile in the Siberian mines," said the boy, bluntly, "and he is as innocent as you or I."

"Condemned for life!" gasped the poor woman, sinking into a chair. "Oh, this is terrible! Is there no pity—no justice in Russia?"

"There is," said the boy, firmly, "and I shall not rest till my father is free, for he is innocent."

"But the sentence must have been concurred in by all three judges, my son, to be so extreme."

"It was, but the judge advocate, Skobinski, was half asleep, and the judge inferior, Orloff, is quite deaf and heard nothing. It was the Count Petrovitch who really pronounced sentence, and I saw him smile cruelly, while a look of deadly hatred came upon his face. That man, mother, is our enemy. I know it!"

"He has never been a friend, my son, but I know no reason for his hating us."

"Was the Count Wassiloff his friend, as he pretends?"

"The Count Wassiloff was above him in rank, and he will never be a general."

That night, after he had eaten his supper, Boris set out for the prison, being determined to see his father once more before he was sent into exile.

To reach the place he passed through a dreadful quarter of the city, being thus enabled to have considerable distance.

As he was hurrying through a dark, narrow street, a flood

of light suddenly shot across his path, and two tipsy ruffians came reeling out of a wine shop.

"Well, Dimitri, my man," hiccupped one, "if this place is too good for us we will find others where we will be gladly received. The gold which our master gave us lies heavy at the bottom of my wallet, and I must lighten it before the night is over."

"Ay, that is good, but let not thy head get tight as well, Orloff," stammered the other, as the two locked arms and proceeded most unsteadily down the street in advance of Boris. "What we know is not for all ears."

"No, it is not, for if that poor devil bound for the mines heard it and knew how he had been sold, he might——"

"Yes, but he won't, Orloff, if you don't tell every one how we swore like honest men that we saw him following the general, Wassil——"

"Now, it is thy tongue which wags too much, Dimitri," cried the other, while a cold sweat stood upon the forehead of the boy following close behind. "Next you will tell that we were paid for finding the treasonable documents in the house of Feod——"

"Ha! here is a shop where we will be welcome," interrupted Dimitri; "but be careful what you say, Orloff."

As the men pushed open the door of a wretched drinking place, already crowded with depraved men and women, Boris stood like one petrified.

"I knew there was a plot," he muttered, at length. "Oh, if I only could make these men speak; but to follow them now means danger, perhaps even death."

Sick at heart, the poor boy turned away and bent his steps mechanically toward home, without noting in which direction he was going. He suddenly heard a commotion, saw a bright light, looked up and found himself close to the wine shop where the two tipplers had disappeared earlier in the evening.

The door had just been thrown open, and out rushed, pell-mell, nearly a dozen angry men, all shouting at the top of their voices.

There was a flash of steel in the light, then a startled cry, then a heavy fall, and then hoarse whispers as the men fled.

In an instant the door was closed and all was dark, but at the next moment the astonished boy heard a deep groan almost at his feet.

"Water!" gasped some one, and the boy started violently, for he recognized the voice as that of Orloff. As he started forward he stumbled against some object and nearly fell upon the wounded man.

"Merciful Heaven, there are two!" he muttered, as his hand touched the face of a man, and at the same instant he heard a voice in his ear repeat the cry for water.

"Where is Dimitri?" asked the man in a faint voice.

The boy knelt on the cold stones, placed his hand on the heart of the man over whom he had stumbled, and said:

"He is dead, and you, too, may be dying. Confess your crimes while you still have time. Who was it whose life you swore away to-day?"

"No, no, not his life," gasped the man—"not his life! And besides—— No, no, we are not responsible; it is the master, the——"

"Yes, yes! tell me his name," interrupted the boy, fiercely. "Tell me his name, as you hope for pardon."

Footsteps were heard approaching, and the boy sprang to his feet, fearing the police, for he knew that he would be arrested if found in such a position.

As he arose he saw the glint of a lantern and then a voice said:

"Who goes? Shame upon you, disturbers of the peace!"

"A murder has been done," said the boy, "and the new-comer was a priest, and not an officer of the law."

"and my own confession, holy father, and save the innocent from great wrong!"

"A murder!" said the priest. "This is indeed serious," and he came forward and knelt by the side of the dying man.

Dimitri was already dead, and Orloff had received a fatal wound which would soon end in his death.

Boris hurriedly told who he was and what he suspected, and begged the priest to extract the truth from the dying man, and thus save his father.

"I cannot reveal the secrets of the confessional, my son," said the priest, "even to save life."

"Water, water!" cried Orloff. "We were too glib in our speech, and they—ha! it was I swore falsely against Feodoror—it was I who sent an innocent man into exile. He did not kill General Wassiloff, but I——"

He suddenly broke off and fell in a faint, and the priest summoned assistance, the keepers of the wine shop appearing after considerable delay.

The dead men were carried away by the police, and Boris went home, the priest giving his word that the boy knew nothing of the affair.

As the boy went home, the holy man whispered in his ear: "Take thy story to the Czar, my son. He will hear you and set your father free."

At last, one day as the Czar was coming from his palace and was about to enter his carriage, Boris sprang through the guards, threw himself at his sovereign's feet, and cried:

"Father of all the Russias, give me justice, in the name of Heaven!"

Alexander stopped, waved back the guards, and said:

"No one appeals to the emperor in that name in vain. What do you wish, my boy?"

"Justice for an innocent man, sire," said Boris, rapidly telling his story.

"I knew nothing of this," said the Czar, and calling for writing materials on the spot, he made out, signed and sealed a full pardon for Sergius Feodoror, and gave the boy an order upon the keeper of the prison for the prisoner's release."

"A thousand thanks, sire" said the boy, as pressing the pardon to his breast, he hurried away to the prison.

Here a terrible blow awaited the devoted boy.

The imperial order opened the prison doors, but the one he sought was not to be found.

Feodoror had been sent with other condemned men to Siberia more than a week before.

"Then I will follow and save him," muttered the boy. "This Count Petrovitch's work, I am sure, but with the aid of Heaven I will yet outwit the schemer."

Leaving St. Petersburg, he traveled by rail, third-class, to Nijni Novgorod, his route being thence by a post road to Perm, and across the mountains into Siberia.

But with numerous vexatious delays, the train being delayed at one point several hours by an accident on the line, and at another point a bridge had broken, and an engine lay on the ground before he could cross over.

Pressing on with what money he had left, he pushed on, making the success of his mission nearer than he dared hope.

When not more than ten miles upon his road a storm overtook him, his horse became frightened and dashed on at a terrible pace, utterly beyond his control.

An ex-communicated monk swept him from his saddle, and he fell headlong to the ground; and in another moment he lay on his back, his horse plunging over a deep ditch, made by the carrying away of a rude bridge, with a fall of some twenty feet into a little woodland stream.

He remained where he was until the storm had passed, and

then made his way on foot to the nearest town, after being obliged to take a long detour.

At the tavern he met a rough-looking man, evidently a drover, who looked at him with suspicion and asked him his name and destination.

"I am only a poor Mujik, sir," he said, "going to my home near Omsk. I lost my horse in the storm, and must go on foot the rest of the way."

"You lie!" hissed the man, taking a long whip from the inside of his blouse. "You are a spy—a miserable Nihilist—and you are trying to stir up the people against our kind and loving master, the Czar!"

Then without further warning, the man suddenly began to lash the poor boy most unmercifully with a whip which had a short stock and a very long lash, and could be wielded with most terrible effect.

Smarting with pain, and half blinded by a stinging blow in the face, Boris writhed under the cruel punishment, but at last managed to escape and rushed from the place like a hunted deer.

In a few minutes Boris knew that he was being followed, and he hurried on, hoping to get clear of the village before being overtaken.

Men and women came hurrying from all directions, however, and in a short time the boy found himself hemmed in by an angry crowd of half civilized peasants, all threatening him with death.

Picking up a stout stick which had been hurled at him, the boy stood at bay against the wall of a low cabin, built of rough logs, while a shower of sticks, stones and clods of earth flew around him.

"You are a spy of the Nihilists!" roared one of the foremost of the crowd.

"It is a lie, and he who told you so is himself a spy, not of the Nihilists, but of the police, a hireling of the villains who, unknown to our good emperor, condemn innocent men to exile and death to further their own ends. I know the man now; he is one of the guards who accompany the poor prisoners to Siberia. I have seen him in St. Petersburg and know him for a villain."

The mob now began to murmur against the man who had set them upon the boy, and the latter went on excitedly:

"Do you know who I am? I am the son of an honest man in St. Petersburg, who has been sent to Siberia for a crime he never committed. I have the Czar's pardon with me now, and I command you all, upon your allegiance, to assist me in reaching the train at once, that I may set my father free."

A shout went up, and those who were lately most eager to kill the lad were now most earnest in their professions of friendship.

Across the weary steppes he traveled, now seeing the end near, now finding it far distant, but at last he overtook the party which had been delayed by the death of two of the women, and delivered the Czar's message.

The man who had beaten him was now in charge of the party, and he darted a look of hate at the boy as he obeyed the order which he dared not disobey, and muttered a threat under his breath.

Sergius Feodoror was released, and he and Boris hastened to return to St. Petersburg, but now every one seemed to be willing to help them, and the journey was accomplished in a quarter the time it had taken the boy alone.

At last it was known everywhere that General Petrovitch had committed suicide after having confessed that he had instigated the murder of the man he had succeeded, and had restored the crime upon an old man, when he had at first intended to punish Feodoror and his son. The boy, however, remained a long time in the prison, and then he was released.

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